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THE TALK OF THE SPARROWS.

BY NATHAN D. URNER.

What in the world are they saying—
The sparrows murmuring sweet—
Over the green of the public square,
And over the bustling street?
I think they are talking together
Of how they must build their nest,
So the tiny eggs will cuddle soft
Below the feathered breast.

At least there can be no mischief
In those voices free and glad,
And they lend to the park a pleasure
Which without them it would not have had.
I see them flit at the fountain,
And sip the waters clear,
And they seem to be creatures of rapture,
That know not sorrow or fear.

They spring for the crumbs that are scattered,
And always daintily eat;
Not a morsel of that white manna
Do they touch with their gentle feet.
Yet ever they talk to each other
In their beautiful, dutiful way,
And one cannot help wondering, pondering,
What they to each other must say.

Ah! the voice of birds is the language
Which we never can understand,
Though grateful we are for the music
Which they make over all the land.
They sing out their lives in the greenwood,
Or soaring the blue vault above,
And many a strong heart that suffers
They soothe with their language of love.

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THE RIVAL SISTERS.

By ELIZA A. DUPUY,

AUTHOR OF THE "EVIL GENIUS," THE "WHITE TERROR," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DECISIVE LOVE LETTER.

The thoughts that passed through Hester Blake's mind, as she sat in that silent room beside the dying form of her father, were bitter and hard enough to have changed her nature, had it been a truer and nobler one than it was.

She had come to him in the hope that he would enable her to escape from the temptation of taking a part in the nefarious scheme planned by her mother, and acquiesced in by her betrothed husband; but now there seemed to be no other course left to her. Comparative poverty, and a speedy union with the man who held her promise; or great wealth, with the chances in her favor that the power it would give her might enable her to extricate herself from the grasp Macon had laid upon her fate.

The last lingering scruples died away when Dr. Macon came softly into the room, and stood where she could see his shrewd, yet mean face in contrast with the noble lineaments of her father. She bitterly thought:

"He does not even look like a gentleman, yet I was pronounced fortunate to have won his love. Anything is good enough for the castaway, though I am as near to *him* as the dainty darlings he has so lovingly cherished. *My* chance has come at last; so why shall not I avail myself of it, and feel grateful to her whose shrewdness afforded it to me? I have made up my mind. I will not accept the crumbs of my sister's bounty, when I can so easily make her dependent on mine."

While these thoughts passed through her mind, Macon stooped over his patient, and ascertained that he was sleeping soundly. He whispered to Hester:

"You can remove your hand from his without danger of awakening him. I will take your place, and you can remain with Miss Landry till your mother comes. It cannot be long now, but you must warn her not to come in here, or make her presence known in any way. Mr. Landry is not aware that Mrs. Brown has left, nor is it expedient that he shall know it."

"I understand. I will go now, for I must speak with my mother as soon as she arrives," she replied, in a low, dull tone, and he looked sharply at her, trying to read the result of the interview which had just taken place. That it had not been satisfactory he could easily perceive, and with some elation, he thought:

"He has disappointed her in some way, and she will fall into our plans now. Why should she hesitate when the way is so clear before her? She is too sharp not to understand her own interests. I would take her all the same without a cent, but we shall both be better with the magnificent inheritance she can so easily secure."

As Hester gave him her place beside the bed, she pointed significantly to the next room, and asked, in a faint whisper:

"Are you perfectly sure that you told me the truth about *her?*"

"Yes; more certain of it than I was when I came hither. Decide as you may, you cannot injure her."

She bowed her head, and passed out of the room.

Hester sat down by the motionless form of the girl whose rights she was ready to usurp, but now she was hard and cold as stone. The faint impulse of compassion that had moved her when she first looked on the sick girl was quenched, and she tried to convince herself that it would be no wrong to her to assume the position that Estelle would never again be capable of filling.

"There is no escape from that man, but I can at least evade him a little while, if I consent to do what they wish. Why should I not consent? It is silly to hesitate, and I will not any longer. I will tell my mother what I have determined on as soon as I see her."

She had scarcely arrived at this decision when the sound of wheels was heard without. She arose and went to the gate, to find her mother alighting from the open carriage which had brought her there, and a tall ungainly looking girl, in a calico dress and sunbonnet of the same material, standing on the road. She gesticulated with animation to Hester as she drew near, and was replied to in the same mute language, though with less eagerness.

Mrs. Blake smiled as she said:

"Eunice is delighted to be of use to us, and she will stay as long as we may need her. How are our sick friends now?"

"Both of them are asleep, and we must avoid making a noise to disturb them. The driver had better take the boxes in through the back way, as the two front rooms are occupied by Mr. Landry and his daughter. I will help Eunice to carry in the small parcels myself."

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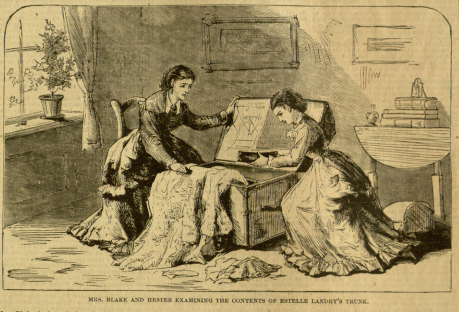

MRS. BLAKE AND HESTER EXAMINING THE CONTENTS OF ESTELLE LANDRY'S TRUNK.

The man went in with the boxes in which Mrs. Blake had packed such things as she thought they might need, and when he came back she paid and dismissed him. A jar of jelly and a few bottles of wine were taken from the carriage before it was driven away, and the three went around the house by a narrow pathway partially overgrown with grass, and found the entrance to the kitchen. The articles brought had been placed on the floor, but there was nothing else in the room save the pine shelves that were built against the wall.

In a little nook opening from it stood an old stove, which had not been thought worth removing, and beside it was a pile of split wood ready for use.

"We shall do very well," said Mrs. Blake, looking around her. "I have brought with me all that we shall need for the few days we are likely to stay here. Eunice can open the boxes and put the things in their places, while we speak together. Mrs. Brown has left the place quite clean, I am glad to see."

She made a few signs to the girl, who by this time had taken off her bonnet and stood looking around her, as if uncertain what was to be done next. She had a rosy, round face, with a simple expression which told that nature had not, in her case, compensated for the loss of sound and speech by giving her a sharp or observant mind. Eunice Barker was affectionate, and grateful for kindness shown her, but she was incapable of anything beyond that. She understood housework, and was a faithful and competent drudge to any one who would have patience with her infirmity, and reward her efforts to please with pleasant looks. She had been occasionally employed at Elm Cottage, and Hester had quite won her heart by learning her dumb language and amusing herself in talking with her.

Eunice nodded and smiled in reply to Mrs. Blake's signs, and went to work at once at the duties assigned her.

Mrs. Blake and her daughter passed out into the yard, and finding a bench under an old apple-tree, they sat down upon it as if by mutual consent, without a word being said between them.

Then the elder woman asked:

"How long can Mr. Landry live, and what is the extent of what he will do for you? Not much, I think, from what your face tells me; but that does not signify much in the present position of affairs."

"He may live through another night, but hardly longer than that, I think. You are right as to the revelation my face has made to you, but it does signify a great deal to me that he is unable to give me enough to carry out my own wishes. There is literally nothing left to me now but to comply with yours."

"Will he do nothing for you?" asked her mother, in a tone of concentrated anger. "But that is impossible. What then has he offered you?"

"I have written a letter at his dictation, in which he enjoins my sister to draw fifteen thousand dollars from a banking firm in New Orleans, and secure that sum to me as a gift from herself. Here is the letter; you can read it."

Hester drew the paper from her pocket, and after glancing over it, Mrs. Blake scornfully said:

"So this informal paper is all that you have to stand between yourself and utter destitution. It is a pitiful provision for a man of Armand Landry's wealth to make for one who has such claims on him as you have; but contemptible as it is, there is no certainty that you will ever get a cent of it. Estelle Landry may never recover her senses; and if she does, she may choose to ignore such a communication as this, and declare the whole of it to be a fabrication of your own."

"I do not think she would do that," said Hester quietly; "but it is of no use to discuss that now. Dr. Macon declares that her mind is irretrievably shattered, and there is nothing left for me but to secure the position my half-sister will never be able to fill again. Under all the circumstances, I hardly think it will be a wrong to her to do so. I have thought it all over, and my mind is quite made up to follow your counsels."

Mrs. Blake's face grew radiant as Hester thus spoke. She eagerly said:

"I knew that it must end so. I never doubted what the result would be, after you came hither and saw for yourself how hopeless the future must be for you unless you consent to be guided by me. Your father spoke of me to you, of course. What—what did he say?"

"Nothing that you would care to have repeated, or that I should be willing to report. He insists that you shall not enter the house in which he is; and you must be very careful not to betray your presence near him. I believe, if you were to enter his apartment, he would die in a convulsion of anger and disgust."

An expression of bitter pain swept over the dark face of Mrs. Blake, and she sat silent a few moments. She then decisively said:

"I shall see him and speak with him before the end comes, in spite of his prohibition. I loved him once as only such women as I *can* love. I hate him now as only such demons as he has made me can hate. Hester, I thank you for giving me the power to strike him again. I love you more dearly for joining with me in avenging our mutual wrongs upon this man, than I ever did before. Kiss me, child, and let us go in to look on the discrowned heiress. Ellinor Russell's child has come down to be a pensioner on mine, and through my compassion alone can she have even the attentions necessary to her imbecile condition. Eureka! I could shout and clap my hands, if I only dared to give way to my feelings."

The misguided woman was fairly beside herself with vindictive exultation. If she could have foreseen the disgrace and woe which her evil designs were to bring upon herself and daughter, she would have been frightened from her purpose. But who that is swayed by sentiments of greed and vengeance, ever sees even so much as the shadow of the inevitable Nemesis that follows close behind him!

Hester looked at her mother in astonishment and fear, for her cheeks were flushed, and her eyes flashed in so wild a manner, that for a few moments she feared her mind was unhinged.

"You look very strangely, mother," she said. "Pray calm yourself, and do not attempt such demonstrations as might enlighten my father as to your presence here. I assured him that you would not come hither, and he thinks he is secure from intrusion from you."

With a smile of mocking bitterness, Mrs. Blake replied:

"So he thought himself secure in his dream of wedded bliss; but it came to naught. From the day in which Armand Landry interwove his fate with mine, he lost all right to security in anything without interference from me. He belongs to me, and I mean to assert my claim on him before the end comes. I must pay him back some of the bitterness he has poured out on me, or I could not die contented when my own time comes."

The basilisk glitter was in her deep black eyes, and the red glow had faded on her cheeks into a dull, sallow hue. She raised her clenched hands above her head, and her lips moved, though no sound came from them. Hester watched her uneasily, and after a pause, said:

"You had better remain in the open air till you have quite regained self-control. My father is sleeping now, and Dr. Macon will not be willing to allow you to enter his room."

"A fig for Dr. Macon! I did not come here to be dictated to by him. But I don't wish to see Landry now. I do not wish to approach him till the flame of life is sparkling brightly for the last time before extinction comes. In those supreme moments in which the panorama of life passes swiftly before him, and he feels that he is losing all hold upon it, I will stand before him and tell him of my wrongs, and of the vengeance I still mean to take, as a requital for them."

"Oh, mother! that will be a terrible thing to do! Let him at least die in peace. He has not merited such retribution at your hands."

"Of that I am the best judge," cried Mrs. Blake fiercely. "How should *you* know what he has merited at my hands? Yet, if you could have read the meaning of the bitter tears I shed above your baby head, you would comprehend something of what I have gone through. It is an awful thing, Hester, to place your all of hope and happiness in the keeping of a man, trusting implicitly to his sense of honor, and to find it has failed you."

"I am not doing that, mother. I am only pleading for mercy to that helpless and unfortunate man who lies so completely in our power. I think it will be enough to consummate the wrong we have decided on against his daughter, without torturing him in his last moments with the knowledge of what we mean to do, and making him feel how impossible it is for him to prevent it."

"You speak of his daughter as if he has but one, and that she *alone* is worthy of consideration. Don't be such a craven, Hester. I thought you had more of my spirit in you."

"I have spirit enough, and to spare; but this man is my father, and he has done for me all that he could. In consideration of that, I ask you to spare him this last crowning anguish. When he is gone, you will feel remorse for having tortured him in his last moments."

The mother savagely rejoined:

"Yes; as much remorse as the executioner felt in ancient days, when he was required to tear his victim limb from limb. I have thrust one deadly blow at that man's heart, and I will give it another, and another still, before he goes down to Hades to join the woman who dared to step into the place that of right was mine. What has he done for *you*, that you should attempt to stand between me and him? He has barely given us the means of living, while his younger children revelled in wealth; and now he offers you a pitiful sum that is hardly worth accepting, even if that girl would ever be in a condition to believe our statements, and consent to give it to you. Take your hand from mine; do not attempt to detain me, for I am going in to gloat over the helpless and hopeless condition of Ellinor Russell's daughter. She is to be left to me, a gibbering idiot, to be taken care of, while *you* flaunt before the world as the possessor of her fortune."

Hester saw that further words would be useless in the state of excitement into which her mother had wrought herself, and she withdrew the hand she had laid upon her arm, and allowed Mrs. Blake to precede her in the pathway that led around the house.

She entered the room in which Estelle Landry lay so still and death-like, and stood looking down on her a long time in silence. Her face did not soften as she watched the heavy breathing of the senseless girl; on the contrary, an expression of vindictive triumph came into it.

Hester had paused in the open door-way, and stood watching her mother keenly, for she began to dread that her mind was losing its balance. Suddenly Mrs. Blake turned to her, and sharply asked:

"What are you staring at me in that way for? I am not going to do anything to impede the execution of our plans, now that they are in so fair a way of accomplishment. Take my bonnet, and then go in to your father, while Dr. Macon comes to me. I wish to speak with him."

Hester took the bonnet, and hung it up on a nail in one of the window-frames. The large travelling trunk belonging to Estelle Landry had been brought up from the railroad, and placed near the door. Her mother pointed to it, and asked:

"Have you been examining that? I see that it has been opened, for the key is in the lock."

"I have not looked into it. I suppose that Mrs. Brown opened it to get out the gown Estelle has on. There is her travelling dress hanging against the wall. It seems to have suffered very little, which is lucky, as I shall want it when I go away."

"Yes; it will fit you exactly, I am sure, and as it is black, it will answer as well as a new one. Don't call Dr. Macon just yet; I think I would rather look through that trunk before he comes to me. We may find out something it will be as well for us to know before we undertake to carry out our plans."

Hester willingly acceded to this proposal, and she threw back the lid of the trunk and knelt beside it to inspect its contents. Mrs. Blake stood over her, watching her movements with her glittering eyes. She said:

"It was very lucky this trunk was saved. It gives you not only a stock of costly clothing, but it may put you in possession of such secrets of its owner as it may be well for you to know."

There were two trays, and in the upper one was found only a supply of under clothing and loose gowns, made of very fine material, and elaborately embroidered.

Mrs. Blake glanced at these, and said:

"She seems to have had luxurious tastes, and to have been boundlessly extravagant in gratifying them. In that you are enough like her to take her place naturally. Put those aside, and let us see what is beneath."

The lower tray was filled with handkerchiefs, laces, ribbons, gloves, and all the elegant trifles of a lady's toilet. There were three caskets filled with jewels. The first one Hester opened held a set of rose coral of exquisite finish and design; the second one held pearls, and the girl said, as she held them up:

"These are no better suited to her than they are to me, though they are very beautiful. The coral will be far more becoming to my dark beauty."

"The pearls belonged to her mother, and I have seen her wear them when she looked almost as white as they," said Mrs. Blake, with a faint tone of vindictive feeling ringing through her voice. "See what is in the last one."

As she opened it, a cry of delight came from Hester's lips, and she said:

"What a magnificent parure! They are a fortune in themselves!"

She lifted a necklace of rose diamonds in an old-fashioned, but very elegant setting, and held them to the light. The set was complete, and all of gems of rare value. There was also a bandeau for the hair, the gleaming stones of which were linked together by enamelled violets.

Mrs. Blake regarded them triumphantly, and said:

"Those are the Landry diamonds brought from France by the first one of the family, who fled to Louisiana in the reign of terror. They have never been reset since those days, but the tiara was added to them by Armand at the time of his marriage, and the first time I ever saw his wife she wore them, at a grand reception given soon after her arrival at the plantation. *I* was not one of the guests, of course, but I concealed myself among the shrubbery, and saw the woman I hated so in all the bravery that should have been mine. He once told me of his family jewels, but I was not considered grand enough to wear them. Much good did they do the woman to whom they were given, and much joy did she have in wearing them! Now they are yours, to do as you please with; and they are well worth having too. The set was valued at fifty thousand dollars before the bandeau was added to them, and that cost nearly as much more. You see the difference your father makes between you and *her*," pointing with fierce disdain to the unconscious figure upon the bed. "He gives her all the appliances of state and luxury, and to *you* the bare means to maintain life."

Hester was scarcely listening to her bitter words. She still held the gems in her hand, and she was thinking:

"If I could appropriate these, I might escape the worse sin, and free myself from the necessity of marrying Dr. Macon; but I dare not attempt it. He knows that the trunk was saved, and no doubt he has looked into it himself before this. If I tried to play him false, and get away with these, he would avenge himself by denouncing me as a thief. Well, what am I but that? I am stealing that poor girl's identity, as well as her jewels, and she can't do anything to help herself. I wonder if it is true that she can never be restored so far as to know what she has lost. I suppose it must be so, or Dr. Macon would not have asserted it so positively."

She replaced the necklace, and closed the box with a sudden snap. She said:

"If I could claim those as really mine, I should be rich enough; but as I can't take them without the rest, I do not care to look at them any longer. It is strange that I have found no letters. I must know who and what my sister's intimate friends are before I can perfectly assume her character."

"That is true, but her correspondence may be in the bottom of the trunk. Young girls usually carry with them such letters as they particularly value, and I fancy Estelle will hardly prove an exception."

The tray, with its valuable contents, was lifted out and set upon the floor; beneath it, dresses lay carefully folded and placed upon each other, but in the bottom of the capacious trunk was found a small writing desk, which was locked. Hester took this out, and replaced the articles of clothing; she then said:

"I shall probably find the key in the pocket of her dress. I will examine the contents of this at my leisure, and extract from them such information as will be useful to me in my new *rôle*."

"Lock the trunk and give me the key," said Mrs. Blake. "If the value of its contents were known, I hardly think it would be safe in this out of the way place."

Hester did as she was told, and then placing the desk on the trunk, examined the pocket of the travelling dress which the sick girl had worn at the time of the accident. She found within it a fine cambric handkerchief, the corner of which was drawn through the bow of a small brass key and carefully tied.

On application this was found to fit the lock, and the desk was at once opened. It was in very neat order; there were two packages of letters, one tied up with blue and the other with pink ribbon, and the usual supply of fine stationery found in such writing cases, for this one was elegantly finished and elaborately ornamented with papier maché work.

The letters tied with pink proved to be from Annette De Lorme, a young friend of Estelle Landry who lived in Louisiana; but when the other letters were opened, the nature of their contents gave a pleasurable shock to Hester, in spite of the position in which she was placed with reference to Dr. Macon.

They were from Raymond De Lorme, and were most passionate love-letters, addressed to Miss Landry in the character of her accepted lover. The correspondence extended over a year, and the earlier letters were addressed to her from New Haven, where De Lorme was attending college. Then came three from Louisiana, in which he lamented his mother's determination to send him to Europe for two years, and spoke hardly of Mr. Landry for insisting that his daughter should not give him her hand till she had attained her twentieth year.

In the last he said, toward the close:

"I shall go to Boston to embark, and I will run over to Newport for a few hours to bid you farewell, rose of my life. If you could go with me on this tour, how happy we should be! but that I know to be impossible, since your father and my mother are equally opposed to the marriage taking place till I return.

"I dare say that I am very unreasonable, Estelle; but you, so young, so fair, so highly endowed in every way, will be sought after by many in my absence, and I cannot stifle the jealous pangs that arise when I think that some one among them may come nearer to your heart than your distant Raymond.

"Pardon me, my sweet love, for suggesting doubts as to your constancy, but they will arise in spite of my better judgment, and they must continue to torment me in spite of myself, until the blessed hour arrives which makes you forever my own."

There was much more in the same strain, and as Hester read the words, she recalled the writer in his boyish beauty, and remembered her own strong partiality for him in their childhood.

She fiercely clutched the paper in her hand, and muttered:

"I will take *all*, or nothing! When I know that Ray, the bright, noble, beautiful creature who charmed me in my childhood, is coming back to claim *me* as his bride, I will move heaven and earth to escape from that odious man. I have a new motive to circumvent him *now*, and I will do it, or die in the attempt."

Mrs. Blake had glanced over Annette De Lorme's letters, but when she put out her hand to take one of Raymond's, Hester suddenly huddled them together, and putting them back into the desk, locked it, and hurriedly said:

"I have discovered something which Dr. Macon must not know at present. Let us conceal the desk, and say nothing about its contents till we can consult together. My father is awake. I hear them speaking together, and I must go in to him, while you remain here with Estelle. I will send the doctor to you, but I insist that you shall tell him nothing of what we have found in that trunk."

The mother looked at her in some surprise, and after slight hesitation, said:

"I will do as you wish, but nothing is to be concealed from me, remember. The desk can be put under the bed for the present, and Dr. Macon will not be likely to suspect its presence there. Give me the key, for I too must read those letters that seem to have moved you so deeply."

Hester did not immediately comply with this demand, but she finally surrendered the key, and with assumed indifference, said:

"What you will learn from the letters will show you how difficult is the part I have undertaken to play. But you need have no fears on my account. I have chosen my path, and I intend to walk on it without faltering."

A movement was heard in the next room, and the desk was hastily thrust out of sight beneath the foot of Estelle Landry's bed. A moment later Macon appeared, and informed Hester that her father had asked for her.

CHAPTER X.

HESTER GROWING DESPERATE.

Hester, with a strange glance at Macon as she passed him, went into her father's room, and left him with her mother. She closed the door as she passed through, fearing that Mrs. Blake might incautiously raise her voice, and thus betray to Mr. Landry that she was helping to deceive him, by keeping from him the knowledge that the presence he so much dreaded was already in the house.

Macon drew near Estelle, and significantly said:

"There is not much to fear from *her* interference, Mrs. Blake—that is, if my skill is not at fault. I have induced Hester to believe that recovery is impossible so far as the brain is concerned, but that was only done to quiet such scruples as she seemed to have. If left to nature alone, this girl would be all right in ten days' time, for she has great power of recuperation, both mentally and physically. But it must be your business and mine to keep her in so hazy a condition that she will never be able to assert her rights, or even to understand them."

Mrs. Blake glanced down at the pallid face, and immediately said:

"It would be better for all concerned that she shall never rise from that bed again. It will be a less wrong to her to destroy the body, than to tamper with the mind."

Macon laughed softly, and said:

"Should anything go wrong with us, the accident to her would account for her dazed brain; but if death were produced by unfair means, it might lead to unpleasant results to those in whose care she was left. You see I am bound to think of contingencies. And, moreover, the life of this young lady is my security that when Hester is safely seated in her place, she will not attempt to throw me off. I hope and believe, after what she has said to me, that there is no danger of such inconstancy on her part; but it is best to hold some guarantee in my own hands, and the life of her sister is the best one I can have."

"I cannot understand why it should be," said Mrs. Blake, looking him fixedly in the face.

"Then you are not as sharp as I took you to be, ma'am. Until my marriage with your daughter has actually taken place, the continued existence of this young girl is most important to me; after that event I shall not care much what happens to her, only murder is an ugly thing to think of, and she can be put out of the way effectually enough without resorting to it."

With repressed fierceness, Mrs. Blake said:

"I am to understand then, that the true heiress is to be held as a hostage for the good faith of the spurious one. She is to be left in my care, and what is to prevent me from dealing with her as I choose?"

Macon drew near to her, and slowly said:

"Treachery to *me* in the smallest tittle will be fatal to you, Mrs. Blake, and I would not advise you to attempt it. I know the physical condition of this poor girl, and if anything happens to her beyond what I have myself decreed, I will denounce you as her destroyer even if I ruin myself in doing so. I have risked a great deal by entering into your plans, and I will not be defrauded of the reward I proposed to myself in doing so. When Hester is mine, we can then decide what shall be done with her sister. Until then, you will be careful to obey to the letter the instructions I shall give you."

Mrs. Blake regarded him steadily as he thus spoke, and she comprehended that he did not quite trust in her daughter's assurances of affection for himself, sweetly as they had been given. He meant to render it impossible for Hester to retreat from the fulfillment of the pledges she had given, by holding Estelle Landry in reserve, to be restored to the enjoyment of all she was to lose through their machinations, should it prove his policy to do so.

She spoke in a constrained tone:

"I do not see why you should doubt either Hester or myself. She has assured you that she loves you, and you are aware that it has long been my wish to see her become your wife. We are sufficiently in your power, I think, to dispense with any such guarantee as the life of an imbecile girl will prove."

"What you assert may be true, Mrs. Blake; but until I am *certain* of the future, the existence of Miss Landry shall be carefully guarded by me. To *me* must be left the ultimate disposal of her fate, and all I ask of you is to use the means I shall leave in your hands to prevent her mental faculties from regaining their original brightness. I am acquainted with many of the subtle secrets of chemistry, and I have a preparation of my own which will act upon the brain to paralyze its activity, without material injury to the physical system. Our patient will even bloom into life and beauty again, but the memory of the past will never come back to trouble her contentment, in the quiet existence she will lead under your care."

"I suppose there is nothing left for me but to do your bidding," said Mrs. Blake gloomily; "but few things could be more repulsive to me than having that girl forever near me, and in the character of my own daughter too. I must feign grief at her condition, when my heart is exulting in it as my own work. I must be kind to her, when my natural feelings would prompt me to persecute her in every possible way. It is a hard task I undertake at your bidding, Dr. Macon."

"You seem to forget, Madam, that this whole plot was concocted by you, and acquiesced in by me because your daughter is so much to me that I am ready to do anything you and she desire, if she will give herself to me as the reward of my coöperation. You do nothing at my bidding. You have laid upon yourself the necessity of taking charge of this young girl, and treating her in such a manner as will cause no suspicion to arise that she is not really your daughter."

Mrs. Blake suddenly changed her manner, and said, in her usual monotonous tones:

"I believe you are right, Julian, and I am very silly to oppose you in any way. You are accustomed to foresee and obviate difficulties, and you are bound to secure your own interests of course. I am sorry, though, that you should mistrust Hester, for she looks forward with certainty to a future union with you."

"It is my business to make it a certainty, Mrs. Blake. Your sex find it convenient to change their mind sometimes, and it is to my interest to guard against any such caprice on the part of your charming daughter. In her new position, she will have many temptations to play the part of the coquette, or even of the inconstant; but I will submit to neither. I am the master of her fate, and also of yours, and you will both do well to remember it. I have no wish to threaten you, but I will not be trifled with in any respect. If I aid you to accomplish your views, you are both to be true as steel to me."

"You cannot doubt *me*, Julian; and as to Hester, I suppose your jealous fears will not be set at rest until you are actually married. The sooner that event takes place the better I shall be pleased; for then we can all go to Europe, and I can once more be near my own child, while that incubus is removed from me, and placed in some safe place to be looked after by others."

"Be sure that you shall be released from your unwelcome charge as soon as it is expedient to do so, Mrs. Blake. I do not wish to impose her on you a moment longer than is necessary; but as long as she is with you I shall hold you responsible for her safety. When the arrangements for my marriage with Hester are actually made, I will settle what shall be done with her sister. Perhaps it will be as well for you to go to Europe, under the pretext of seeing what can be done for her restoration; and once there, we should have little difficulty in finding a safe and suitable asylum for her."

"My dear Julian, your mind and Hester's must be in *rapport*, for she suggested the same course to me when we were talking over the chances of our future reunion. That is the only plan to enable me to rejoin my daughter, and thus the prolonged life of Estelle Landry becomes important to me as the excuse for going abroad."

At that moment the still figure on the bed showed some signs of life. She turned slightly, half unclosed her large dark eyes, and faintly muttered:

"Water! I am thirsty."

The two who had carried on this conversation beside her bed looked at each other, and Mrs. Blake hurriedly asked:

"Can she be conscious of what is passing near her? Do you think she has understood what we have been saying?"

"No; that is quite impossible, for her brain is still confused, and incapable of arranging ideas. She has revived much sooner than I expected. I did not suppose she would be in a condition to speak for hours yet. She must be kept perfectly quiet, and I will prepare a composing draught for her myself."

Mrs. Blake nodded, and he went to a closet in the wall, from which he took a wine glass, and filled it with broken ice from a bucket in which a supply of it was packed. On one of the shelves was a pitcher of water, and he poured a small quantity upon the fragments of ice. He then took from his pocket a vial, with a glass stopper carefully covered with kid, and after removing these, shook from its mouth a white powder that was almost impalpable, till the surface of the water was entirely covered with it.

By the time he had restored the bottle to his pocket, the white crystals had all dissolved, and the water looked perfectly colorless. That it was also tasteless was evident from the eagerness with which the patient swallowed the draught, when it was held to her feverish lips.

She sunk back, murmuring:

"Thank you. I—I—feel—" but the words died away on her lips, and with a grim smile of triumph, Macon said:

"I was a little doubtful of its immediate effect on one possessed of such vital power as belongs to her organization, but all is right now. Hester's mind will not be unsettled by finding any further gleams of intelligence in this one. A daily dose from my little bottle will hold the soul in bondage as long as it is continued, and we shall not be likely to fail in administering it, eh, Mrs. Blake?"

There was grim pleasantry in his tone and manner which would have revolted most other women, but Mrs. Blake smiled, as she replied:

"I think not. Where so much is at stake both for you and me, we shall hardly neglect the precautions necessary to secure our own safety."

The sick girl moaned faintly, and tossed up her hands a few times, but these evidences of suffering presently subsided, and she lay as still and death-like as before.

Macon said:

"The first effect of my imbecile powder, as I have christened my preparation, is increased action in the brain, attended by headache; but that will soon pass away, and mental inertia will follow. It will also act upon the physical system, and allay the tendency to fever. It is a marvellous sedative, as you will find."

With a laugh, Mrs. Blake said:

"Your imbecile powder will prove as valuable to us as the *poudre de succession* of the famous French poisoner. It has begun to take effect already, and once under its influence, her fate is absolutely at our disposal."

Macon nodded, and after a pause Mrs. Blake said, in a determined tone:

"In spite of the prohibition of that man in yonder, I must see and speak with him before he dies. While his mind is yet clear enough to comprehend the horror of my presence, I must stand over him, and say that to him which to leave unsaid would deprive me of half my triumph over the man who so basely deserted me."

With impressive earnestness, Macon replied:

"If Hester is to assume the place of Miss Landry, it is desirable to keep life in her father till she again arouses from this death-like sleep. If you insist on seeing him prematurely, the result may be that he will die before our plans are in such a state of progress as to defy detection."

"What limit do you set to her slumbers, and to his life?" she impatiently asked.

"By sunset she will awake, and ask for food. The blow upon her head was not so severe as I have led others to believe for purposes of my own, which you can easily comprehend. But for the precautions I have taken, she would be quite able to go to her father by this time; but you need have no apprehensions of trouble with her. She will be passive in your hands, and all you will be required to do will be to see that her call for nourishment is attended to promptly. Mr. Landry will scarcely live beyond midnight, and by morning Hester must be prepared to take on herself the character she is hereafter to appear in. She must feign sudden and severe illness, and I will give her a preparation which will take all the roses from her cheeks for a few days. She can bind up her head and play the part of the sick girl when the undertaker comes with the coffin; her sister can be taken into the back room, where I have had a bed put up for your use, and even Eunice Barker can be made to believe that she is your own daughter suddenly stricken down with illness."

"As to Eunice, she is too dull to suspect anything, and too much devoted to my daughter to make it known, if she did. I am not afraid of her, and I am going to bring her in here that she may see for herself the remarkable resemblance that exists between Hester and this girl."

"Wait till Miss Landry comes out of this stupor, that Eunice may not be much astonished to-morrow when she finds her double moving about the house and making preparations to go away with her father's dead body."

"That will be best. You wrote those letters to Boston and Newport of which I spoke to you, and thus guarded against intrusion from those quarters?"

"Yes; I hardly think the two old ladies of whom you spoke will think it necessary to send any one to look after Mr. Landry and his daughter. I represented them as quite able to take care of themselves."

After a pause of some length, Mrs. Blake said:

"Our programme is settled, and I think it so good a one that it can hardly fail of success. I will defer my interview with Armand Landry till ten to-night. Then I will go in to him and show him that his Nemesis has indeed overtaken him. You have not deceived me as to his condition, Julian? He will live long enough to taste all the bitterness of the cup I will proffer to his dying lips?"

Dr. Macon looked at her as if she was a curious psychological study, but he did not seem to be astonished or revolted by her words. He only said, in curt tones:

"He will live to the hour I have named, and his mind will be clear enough to comprehended all you may desire to say to him."

He moved toward the door which opened on the yard, and after looking out a few moments, said:

"I am looking for my cab, which Simcox was to send back to me. I think it will be as well to meet the messenger and bring it hither myself. The walk will brighten me up, for I begin to feel the effects of my long watch last night."

Mrs. Blake was very glad to be released from his presence for a season, and she assented to his proposal, telling him that he need not return till their dinner hour, which would be at two. They must live as they could.

He lightly replied that it would be no hardship to him to rough it a little when so much was at stake for them, and went on his way toward the gate.

When he was fairly out of it, Mrs. Blake drew forth the desk, and sat down to read the love-letters addressed to the girl beside her. When she saw from whom they came, her eyes flashed, and her breath came almost as quickly as had that of her daughter when she first understood the nature of their contents.

When she had glanced through them sufficiently to understand their general purport, she replaced them, locked the desk, and sat meditating on this new phase of affairs.

"It is a complication I can scarcely see my way out of," she mused. "Luckily the young man is far away, and we have time to act in before he can come upon the scene again. Hester must be safely married to Dr. Macon before he can get back to this country, and he must be left to believe that his love has proved false; yet what a splendid destiny she must forego, to give her hand to a man from whom she recoils! Raymond De Lorme was the playmate of her childhood; he would come to Le Bocage in spite of the prohibition of his haughty mother. Ah, what a triumph it would be to me to know that *my* daughter was his wife, in spite of Mrs. De Lorme's contemptuous scorn of myself. I would risk much to bring about such an alliance, but it is impossible, *impossible*; so why should I dream of it? Poor girl! after all, her fate will not be so enviable as many may think it, when they hereafter see her surrounded by all the trappings that wealth can purchase. The one bitter drop in her cup will be the husband she must take, for there is no escape from him. He has asserted his power in positive terms, and I know he will maintain it."

Thus thinking, she sat near the window which looked out into the yard till she saw Macon returning. He drove up in his cab, and put both horse and carriage under a shed built on one side of the inclosure. He then came in, glanced at Miss Landry, and said:

"I feel better for my walk, and I will now take Hester's place in the other room. I met the cab a mile hence, and sent back the man who brought it, on foot. I do not think that any one else will be apt to come hither to-day, as I sent word to Simcox that we are getting on very well, and will need no further assistance for the present."

He passed into the adjoining room, and in a few moments Hester came out, looking tired and pale. She sat down on the foot of the bed, and sighed so heavily that her mother hastened to ask:

"What has *he* said to you that has depressed you so much? You have been talking with him since you went in there, I suppose."

"He said very little; talking wearies him, and at any rate he cannot have much more to say to me. I am sorry for him, mother; and but for one thing, I believe I could find it in my heart to refuse to go further in the iniquitous path on which we have set out."

"And what is that thing, pray?" asked Mrs. Blake, in a tone that was both mocking and contemptuous.

Hester looked her clearly in the face, and asked:

"Have you read the letters in that desk?"

"I have; what then?"

"What then? If you do not understand I will tell you," she rapidly said. "I will take my sister's position, her fortune, and—her *lover*, or I will take nothing. The last weighs with me even more than all the rest, for I have not forgotten my early fondness for Raymond, long as we have been separated. As a boy of fourteen he loved me, and I, child as I was, returned his passion. He transferred his allegiance to my sister because she was so much like me that she seemed my second self. I will not permit Raymond De Lorme to think that I have jilted him for such a man as Dr. Macon. I will evade his claims on me at any risk to myself, or any cost to him."

She spoke in a low and guarded tone, but her voice thrilled with passionate excitement, and her mother knew how deeply in earnest she was. There was silence between them a few moments, and then Mrs. Blake spoke in her usual quiet manner:

"This discovery has naturally upset you, Hester, and it is hard on you to be compelled to give up the best possession of your sister. But it must be done, my child. Dr. Macon will prove a ruthless creditor, and unless you pay him all that you have promised, he will become a bitter and remorseless foe. Wealth enjoyed even with him will be better than the narrow and penurious life we must live on the pittance given you, even if you were sure of getting it. The last wishes of your father with reference to yourself are not worth the paper they are written on, unless Estelle Landry regains her mental faculties, and there is no hope of that. Dr. Macon declares that she will be an idiot from this time forth, and I think him quite capable of forming a correct opinion as to her condition."

Hester turned and looked at her sleeping sister. The eyelids of the sick girl were but half closed, and the lustreless orbs that looked out from beneath them, fixed almost as if in death itself, convinced her that her mother spoke the truth. She shuddered violently, and covered her face with her hands a few moments.

When she again looked up she was quite calm, and she coldly said:

"There seems to be no choice left me. I must embrace poverty—labor for my living, and for yours—or consummate this wickedness. I hardly think that I should shrink from it so much, but for the necessity of giving myself to Julian Macon. He has threatened me already with what he will do if I am not true to my pledges. I know what I have to expect at his hands, but I am not afraid of him. I will use him, and then—"

She stopped abruptly, and remained silent so long that Mrs. Blake softly repeated:

"And then, Hester?"

With sudden fierceness she said:

"Then I will deal with him as ruthlessly as he would with me, if I allowed him the chance to do so. Don't question me; don't try to imagine what course I will take. I repeat, I will have *all* that Estelle loses, or I will have nothing. *You* goad me on to do this wrong, and you will have no right to judge me for that which I may hereafter be tempted to do."

"I shall not judge you for words uttered in a time of such excitement as the present," replied Mrs. Blake, with a faint tremor in her voice. "Situated as you are, there is nothing left for you but to choose between wealth and poverty. A few days hence you will view your position more calmly, and the devotion of Dr. Macon will elicit other feelings in your heart. I am not afraid of your attempting anything that will really offend him or compromise yourself."

"*Offend him!*" repeated Hester, with a scoff. "No; I'll not allow him a chance to feel any such emotion as that toward me. I dare say he thinks I shall be bound to him as a slave to her master when this thing is actually done; but when he least expects it, *I* will show him what I think of our mutual relations, and prove to him that the best laid plans are often brought to naught."

"Such talk is all nonsense, Hester, as no one knows better than yourself. Your fate is written; so why should you gird against it in this senseless way?"

"Senseless, is it? Well, perhaps I am mad; but some day you will find that there's 'method in my madness.' If you think I will submit to be taken to the sacrificial altar as tamely as a sheep, you make a great mistake. I shall find something to immolate, as old Abraham did: in place of outraging my own heart and soul by giving up its dearest and best, I will make a *crime* offering, as an atonement for my sins. That was a delightful privilege afforded to those old Hebrews: they were allowed to wash away their sins with the blood of animals, but with us the sacrifice must be that of a human spirit. I wonder if it matters much whether it is an evil or a good one."

There was a degree of wild levity in her manner that made her mother shiver, callous as she was to pity or remorse. She uneasily said:

"You are talking nonsense now, as no one knows better than yourself. Walk out into the woodland, and the fresh air will take the tension from your nerves, and steady them for the ordeal through which you must soon pass. Don't risk losing all we are playing for, Hester, by becoming hysterical just as you need the subtlest command of your senses."

"Oh, I shall be all right when the time comes. I have no nerves to speak of, and I don't intend to let them trouble me as those of Lady Macbeth did after she attained all she sinned for. It was very weak in her not to enjoy the reward of her crime in peace and comfort. I wonder she did not try her hand again, for I sometimes think there must be something fascinating in making others shift off this 'mortal coil;' witness Lucrezia Borgia and Madame Brinvilliers. But I won't shock you any further, *Madame Mère*. I'll go out and hear the birds chirping in the trees, listen to the rippling brook, and try to interpret what the leaves are saying to each other."

She arose while speaking in this wild way, and throwing on her hat, went out and crossed the yard at a rapid pace. She went far away from the farm-house, and sat down on the edge of a little stream that flowed through the woodland, to think. The little that was good in her was rapidly dying out under the influences brought to bear upon her: she began to feel the interest of the gamester, who has everything at stake in the dice he is throwing, and she told herself that for her there was nothing in the future, unless it was won by her own skill and craft. Would she be to blame if she grasped the glittering prize held out to her? Estelle would live on, a harmless nonentity; then why should she not take her place, and wear her honors bravely, without casting a regretful thought to the manner in which they had been won?"

The hours rolled on almost unheeded, but she finally awoke to the consciousness that noon was long past, and it must be time for her to return to the duties she had undertaken to perform to her father.

She retraced her steps, quite composed and resolute now, and ready for the part she had to play. She thought she had arranged the whole drama, and distributed the parts to suit her own views, and she was ready to fight the battle to the end, with such weapons as fate and chance might furnish her.

As Hester drew near the house, Dr. Macon came out to meet her. He said:

"It is time for our dinner, and I was coming in search of you. You have been absent a long time, but luckily Mr. Landry did not ask for you. I have explained to you what must be done to-night, Hester. Here are some drops I have prepared for you, which will make you pallid enough to personate the girl who lies in yonder, and you must take them when you lie down at bedtime. They will not injuriously affect you, though for a season they will banish the roses from your cheeks. It will be as well, perhaps, for you to complain to the dumb girl that the sun has affected your head while you have been out. Sunstrokes are not uncommon at this season of the year, and one would easily account for your sham illness."

Hester laughed lightly as she took the bottle.

"Your fertile brain enables you to turn everything to account, Julian. I am sure I had no design in staying out so long but to think my own thoughts; but you make capital out of my heedlessness in a way that seems really wonderful to me."

Macon smiled down on her in that superior way which fatuous men are addicted to when a compliment, however equivocal, is offered to them. He rather pompously said:

"Since I am to be your guide and guard in the future, it is fortunate that I have the qualities which must command your admiration and respect. Hand in hand we shall win a great future, Hester; but like the Persian's bundle of sticks, we should be of no value apart. I believe you have come to feel that, my angel."

"Two sticks don't make a bundle, and I don't know that I like to be compared to a stick, at any rate," she half petulantly said. "Suppose I prove an evil angel to you; what would you do in that case?"

He steadily regarded her a moment, and then dryly said:

"I think that you will find it to your interest to be a good one to me. What I would do if the reverse happened, I need not attempt to set forth. I should be guided by the exigencies of the case. When you are my wife, we shall understand each other better, and the bond that will bind us together will not be one that can be lightly broken."

"So much the better for such true lovers as we are," she carelessly replied, as she concealed the bottle he had given her in the pocket of her dress, and went into the house.

Hester took in the panada which had been prepared for her father, and carefully fed him herself, while Macon and her mother partook of the repast Eunice had placed on the tall box, after spreading a napkin over it.

Mr. Landry was induced to eat a few morsels, but he complained of a difficulty in swallowing even those.

"The end cannot be far off," he wearily said. "Is Estelle sensible yet? Ah, if I could only exchange a few words with her, I should die better contented."

"She sleeps yet. Don't worry yourself on *my* account, sir; I shall do very well, I have no doubt."

With a heavy sigh, he turned his face to the wall and said no more, and Hester left him again alone.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

—Men's feelings are always purest and most glowing in the hour of meeting and of farewell; like the glaciers, which are transparent and rosy-hued only at sunrise and sunset, but throughout the day gray and cold.

WIT AND HUMOR.

A HIGH-TEMPERED husband quarrelled with his wife the other morning, and getting the worst of it, he took his razor from his box and threatened to sever his jugular vein. His daughter fell on her knees and begged him to desist, but he wouldn't do it. "Let the old fool cut his throat if he wants to!" exclaimed his wife. "Oh, that's what you want, is it?" retorted the husband. "Well, I was determined to get the best of you somehow, and now I'll do it," he added, as he carefully replaced the razor in its box.

A DANDY whose clothes were highly scented with perfumes, looked disdainfully at a country looking man who took a seat beside him at a concert. The latter observing the sneer, said, in an audible voice, "I say, mister, there's no use of your carrying that smell about with you. You just bury them clothes o' yourn in the sand for about a week, and they'll smell as good as mine." The dandy was extinguished.

"I NEVER go to church," said an irreverent man to a pious lady; "I always spend Sunday in settling accounts." "There is another day," said the lady, "that will be spent in the same way." "What day is that?" asked the man. "The Day of Judgment," was the solemn reply.

A WEALTHY but miserly old man, dining down town one day with his son at a restaurant, whispered in his ear, "Tom, you must eat for to-day and to-morrow." "O yes," retorted the half-starved lad, "but I ha'n't eaten for yesterday and the day before, yet, father!"

A MAN objected to paying for a death notice in a newspaper, and demanded, "Why should marriage and death notices be paid for, any how?" "Because," replied the heartless publisher, "one is a notice of copartnership and the other of dissolution. Business is business."

"PRAY bestow your charity, young gentleman, on a poor blind man," said a beggar to a person passing by. "If you are blind, my good fellow, how did you know I was young?" "Oh, sir, I beg your pardon, I made a mistake; pray give a trifle to a poor dumb man."

"HOW do you expect to get through that great drift with such a little shovel?" asked a gentleman of a small boy who, with a small shovel, was working at a huge bank of snow. "By sticking to it," was the quiet reply of the little fellow, as he shovelled away.

A BLIND woman in Iowa having learned to thread a cambric needle with her teeth and tongue, an old bachelor exclaims, "That is not to be wondered at, for I should like to know what there is in this world that a woman's tongue can't do—or undo!"

AN elderly millionaire, being pestered with all manner of applications for money, says, "I was good-natured once; but I beg to state, in the most positive terms, that I am now old, tired, very ill-natured, and want that fact generally known."

"WHAT makes you so glum, Tom?" "Because I've just had to endure a sad trial to my feelings." "What on earth was it?" "Why, I had to tie on a pretty girl's bonnet while her mother was looking on."

A LEGISLATIVE or congressional bribe is now called "a pecuniary compliment," and it is the regular thing to "take it in the same spirit in which it is offered."

To flatter people adroitly one must know three things: what they really are, what they think they are, and what they want other people to think they are.

A SNOB once asked an honest laboring man what part he performed in the great drama of life. "I mind my own business and pay my way," was the reply.

A LITTLE girl wanting a fan, but not being able to remember the word, said she "wanted a thing to brush the warmth off with."

"MAMMA, do you know what the largest species of ants are? You shake your head. Well, I'll tell. They're eleph-ants."

WHEN is a school-boy like a postage stamp? When he gets licked and put in a corner to make him stick to his letters.

MOTTO for a ferry-boat cabin—If passengers expect to rate as gentlemen, they must not expectorate on this floor.

CAN a girl with a *taper* waist be said to have a *light* figure?

WHAT is the oldest woman's club? The broomstick.

LIP service—Tea-cups and saucers.

CURRENT ITEMS.

A PENNSYLVANIAN, recently deceased, who was supposed to be wealthy, occasioned much disappointment and annoyance to his relatives and intimate friends by leaving them handsome legacies in his will, in some cases consisting of bank stock or government bonds, and in others of city property or large tracts of land, whereas he, in fact, was not worth ten thousand dollars—the bank stock, bonds, city property and tracts of land having no existence save in his imagination. It is now supposed that he had become insane on the subject of property.

A COLORED woman, probably the largest and heaviest person of her sex in the world, died in St. Louis, about two weeks ago, at the age of fifty-one years. The almost incredible statement is made that she weighed between nine hundred and one thousand pounds, was five feet ten inches in height, and twenty-eight inches across the shoulders, and that her arms were thirty inches in circumference. It took eight men and six rollers combined to lower her from the wagon into her grave.

A MAN was recently discharged from the Rhode Island Penitentiary, after eight years' imprisonment, it having been ascertained that he was entirely innocent of the crime charged against him. After his release, the General Assembly of the State voted him two hundred dollars as a compensation for the injustice that had been done him, which was just twenty-five dollars a year for hard work, prison fare, and no privileges. That was certainly poor pay.

A FEW days ago a suspicious citizen of Newburyport discovered a newly made grave in the woods at East Salisbury, and summoning a policeman and one of the Selectmen of Salisbury, proceeded to solve the mystery. Digging down a few feet, the party discovered a box, and inside the box an elegant casket, and inside the casket a dog lying on his back, with his fore-paws curled up. They didn't send for a coroner.

A LAZY negro boy at Louisville, Ky., who was hired to hold a horse in pasture, tied the rope to his arm and lay down on the grass. A train of cars approaching, frightened the horse, and he started off, dragging the boy after him. The horse was not stopped for some time, as the boy dragging after him frightened him as much as the train of cars did. The boy was terribly mangled, and soon died.

A FEW days ago, at Memphis, Tenn., railroad trains were detained by vast numbers of caterpillars lying on the tracks, the wheels of the cars crushing the insects, and the tracks becoming in consequence so slippery that the wheels would not turn. The woods in the neighborhood and in some other localities in the State are completely stripped of their foliage by those pests.

A FEW Sundays ago, a boy in Rochester was detected in the act of fishing money out of the contribution box in the vestry of a church, with two long sticks, whereby the scrip was dexterously extracted from the box to be transferred to the pockets of the sinful angler. The Sunday before he had secured $10 in this way.

A HARVARD Freshman is reported to have disappeared, leaving over $1,500 of debts to confiding classmates, boarding-house keepers and tailors. Investigations show that the name by which he was known in Cambridge was fictitious, and that he had played the same game at Trinity College, Hartford.

ON the 5th of April last, a traveller passed through Lincoln county, Maine, over roads having three feet of snow; ten days later he went the same way on roads bare of snow, and saw teams plowing in the fields. The change of season this year is somewhat remarkable for its rapidity.

ACCORDING to the census of 1870, during that year, in Massachusetts, six girls were married at fourteen, thirty-three at fifteen, and one hundred and eighty at sixteen. A woman of sixty was also married for the fourth time.

A WRITER who has been investigating the subject, says the whole number of Siberian exiles, a large proportion of whom have been banished without the least shadow of a trial, is nearly three hundred and fifty thousand.

A TWELVE-YEAR-OLD boy of this city found a loaded revolver in his father's room, and while he was playing with it it went off, and the ball entering the brain of his little brother, only two years old, inflicted a fatal wound.

A RESIDENT of Middlesex, Vt., was burned to death on Saturday of last week, as he was trying to save some of the contents of his house, which was in flames.

THE HEROIC MOTHER'S JOY.[*]

BY WILLIAM ROSS WALLACE.

Stark and white they lie before her,
They, her only sons, there slain
By the red-knifed Border Ruffians,
In their raid on Right again.
There they stretch, with stone-cold bosoms,
Never more for mortal breath;
Hands clenched firm, as if victorious
Even in the hush of death.

Still looks that old Indian mother,
Not a tear in her fixed eye;
On her thin lips not a tremor
As they thus before her lie.
Now her withered hands are lifted
Up to Heaven. Hist! her cry:
"Thank God, they have done their duty,
And like brave men did they die!"

But the other day this terror,
Born of that red demon-band,
Yet the scene is known already
Over all the thrilling Land;
And it has a name already
That no centuries can destroy,
But in History stand sublimely—
"The Heroic Mother's Joy."

Great Republic, in thine Orders
For that grand old mother's race,
So that it may have broad justice
At last in its ancient place,
Tender thought of her must strengthen,
For *thy* Law she lost each boy:
Thine and Time's is now forever
"The Heroic Mother's Joy!"

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[*] An incident in the late terrible murder of United States officers and others, by border ruffians, in the Cherokee Nation.

BETWEEN TWO FIRES.

By MRS. SOUTHWORTH,

AUTHOR OF "THE HIDDEN HAND," "SELF-MADE," "THE BROTHERS," ETC.

CHAPTER CXIX.

HOW EMMA HEARD THE NEWS.

An angel guard—
Chariots of fire, horses of fire encamp,
To keep thee safe. MRS. ELLET.

It was eleven o'clock that night when the Rev. Mr. Lyle and Mr. Brent reached Blue Cliffs, on their return from Wendover.

Of course all the guests of the bridal reception had long since gone away. The house was closed, and all the windows were dark except those of the library, where the gentlemen found the two brides and their hostess sitting up, and awaiting their return.

"Where is Alden? Is he not with you?" anxiously inquired Emma, coming to meet them.

"Our friend might certainly have come back with us if he had chosen to do so; but he deemed it better to remain at Wendover to-night, and we agreed with him. He is at my house," answered Mr. Lyle.

"You have something painful to tell me. I beg you will tell it at once," said Emma, turning very pale, but controlling herself perfectly and speaking with calmness.

"Something ridiculous, if it were not so outrageous, I should say, dear Mrs. Lytton. Is there a light in the parlor?"

"Yes."

"Then come with me there, and I will tell you all about it," answered Mr. Lyle, speaking cheerfully, as he offered his arm to Emma.

They left the room together and went to the parlor, where a lamp was burning low and shedding a dim light around.

Mr. Lyle led his hostess to a sofa, where he sat down beside her.

And then and there he told her the whole history of the charge that had been brought against her husband, as it came out upon the preliminary examination.

Emma listened in unspeakable grief, horror, amazement and mortification. Yet with all these strong emotions struggling in her bosom, she controlled herself so far as to preserve her outward composure and answer with calmness.

"And Mary Grey claims to be *his wife*? I should think the woman were raving mad, but for the plausible testimony she has managed to bring together. As it is, I am forced to look upon this in the same light that you do, as a base conspiracy, in which she has found some skillful confederates. Of course it must be only the embarrassment and mortification of a few days, and then the whole plot must be exposed. Such a plot cannot, certainly, bear a thorough investigation," she said.

But though she spoke so confidently, and believed all that she said, yet her face continued deadly pale, and her hands were clutched closely together on her lap.

Then Mr. Lyle explained to her the delicate motives that governed her husband in deciding him to remain at the Wendover parsonage, and to absent himself entirely from Blue Cliffs and from *her*, until this charge should be disproved.

Emma flushed and paled again, and clutched her hands a little closer, but made no comment yet. She seemed to wait for Mr. Lyle to proceed.

"He says, my child, and he speaks rightly, that if the accusation against him was of almost any other felony than what it is, you should be with him through all he might have to endure. But the accusation being what it is, every consideration for *your* dignity and delicacy constrains him to absent himself from you, until his fair fame shall be cleared. He therefore implores you by me, not to attempt to see him, or even to write to him; but to let all your communications with him be verbal ones, sent through me. And I, on my part, my child, promise to fulfill my duties to you both faithfully and loyally," said Mr. Lyle.

"I must comply," answered Emma, in a low, restrained voice, that would have faltered and broken, had she not possessed and exercised such great power of self-control. "I must comply, although this is the very hardest requisition that my dear husband could make of me—to abandon him in this hour of his greatest need! I must comply, because I know that it is right. Our mutual honor demands this temporary separation, for of course it will be but temporary."

"Very temporary, and lightened by frequent news of each other through me," replied Mr. Lyle.

"But that woman, Mary Grey! The amazing wickedness of that woman!" said Emma, with a shudder, and almost under her breath.

"My dear," said the minister gravely, "you knew Mrs. Grey intimately for several years. Had you really confidence in her during all that time?"

"N-no. I often doubted and suspected her. And I blamed myself for such doubts and suspicions; and compelled myself to think the best of her and do the best for her, for my father's sake, because he loved her. Oh! the astounding wickedness of that woman, as it has developed itself in this conspiracy against us! But she must have had confederates. The minister who professes to have married her to Mr. Lytton, and who gave her a marriage certificate to that effect!—May he not have been a confederate of hers? May he not have taken a false oath, made a false statement and given a false certificate?"

"Oh, no, no, no, my child! a thousand times no! The character of the Rev. Mr. Borden is far above any such suspicion," answered Mr. Lyle.

"Then he must himself have been deceived. Some one must have personated Mr. Lytton at that ceremony—some one who has some resemblance to him—and utterly deceived the minister," said Emma; and she paused for a few moments, with her head upon her hand, as in hard, deep thought; and then a sudden flash of intelligence, like lightning, lit up her face, as she exclaimed, "I know who it was! I know all about it now. Oh, Mr. Lyle, I shall save my dear husband's honor from a breath of reproach, because I have found out all about it now."

"My dear child—" began the good minister, who thought that she looked a little wild.

But Emma vehemently interrupted him.

"It was Craven Kyte who personated Mr. Lytton at that marriage! Oh, I am sure it was! I am as sure of it as I am of being alive at this time. Oh, Mr. Lyle, don't you remember the wonderful personal resemblance between Craven Kyte and Mr. Lytton? They were counterparts of each other, except in one small particular. Craven Kyte had a black mole on his chin. And he was deeply in love with Mary Grey; and she could have done whatever she pleased with him. She could have persuaded him to personate Alden Lytton at that marriage ceremony; and I am sure that she has done so. I feel a positive conviction that he is the man."

"The explanation of the mystery is a very plausible one indeed," gravely mused the minister, with his bearded chin in his hand.

"It is the true and only one," said Emma emphatically.

"Where is the young man now? Has he been heard from yet?" inquired Mr. Lyle.

"No; I believe not. He is still missing. He has been missing ever since last September, when he went away for a holiday. That is another link in the chain of circumstantial evidence against *him*, for it was in September that this marriage was performed."

"This looks more and more likely," mused the minister.

"Mr. Lyle, this is what must be done immediately! Advertisements must be inserted in all the principal newspapers in the principal cities of the United States and Canada, offering great inducements to Craven Kyte, late of Wendover, to return to his home, or to communicate with his friends."

"Yes; that must be done immediately, even upon the bare chance of his being the man we want. But if he *be* the man, there is little likelihood of his making his appearance, or even answering the advertisement. If he *be* the man, he knows that he has committed a misdemeanor in personating Mr. Lytton under these circumstances. And he will not be likely to place himself within reach of justice."

"Then we must also supplement these advertisements with others, offering large rewards for any information as to the present residence of the missing man. And this must be done at once."

"Certainly, if it is done at all. The man must be found and produced in court, to be confronted with Mr. Borden beside Alden Lytton. My dear child, your woman's wit may have saved your husband."

"Heaven grant it!" said Emma fervently.

Next Mr. Lyle informed her of the proposed arrangement by which the two newly married pairs were to give up their bridal tour for the present, while two of them, himself and Laura, should go home to the Wendover parsonage to stay with Alden Lytton, and the other two, Joseph Brent and Electra, should remain at Blue Cliffs, in attendance upon Emma.

"Emma is not a queen that she should require ladies and gentlemen in waiting; but she will be very much comforted by the presence of her dear friends, Joseph and Electra," said the young wife, with a sad smile, as she arose to return to her guests.

Later in the evening Laura and Electra were informed about the state of affairs.

Their amazement was unmeasured and unutterable.

But they at once set down the criminal conspiracy of Mary Grey against Mr. and Mrs. Lytton to its right motive—malignant hatred and revenge for scorned love.

The two young brides most willingly gave up their tours, and consented to stay home with their friends during the time of trial.

The next morning, therefore, Mr. Lyle took his young wife and returned with her to the Wendover parsonage, where he comforted the soul of Alden Lytton by reporting to him all that had passed between himself and Emma.

"She keeps up bravely, heroically. She is worthy to be a hero's wife!" said the minister warmly.

"She is! she is! She comes of a heroic race; therefore the deeper guilt of those who seek to bring dishonor upon 'her!" groaned Alden Lytton.

Then Mr. Lyle said:

"Her feminine intuition discovered what we men, with all our logic, would never have learned—that is to say, who it was that personated *you* at that false marriage."

"Indeed! Who was it?"

"Craven Kyte," answered Mr. Lyle. And then he told Alden Lytton all that had been said between himself and Emma on that subject.

"I feel sure that her suspicions are correct," he added.

"I think it highly probable that they are. Now there are two or three things that must be done this morning: First, those advertisements for the missing man must be written out and distributed all over the country. Secondly, a messenger must be dispatched to Philadelphia to question the people at the Blank House as to whether any of them entered my room and saw me sleeping there during the hours of eleven A. M. and one P. M., on the fifteenth of September of last year, when I was said to have married that woman. And also to search the registers of that date of all the hotels in the city for the name of Craven Kyte."

"To get up evidence for the defence?"

"Certainly, to get up evidence for the defence."

"Have you thought of employing counsel?"

"Certainly. Berners and Denham are as good men as any I can find. I have sent a note to ask Berners to come here to see me to-day. While waiting for him, you and I can write out those advertisements," said Alden Lytton.

These plans were all promptly carried out.

That same day an experienced detective was found and dispatched to Philadelphia to hunt up evidence for the defence.

And that evening advertisements were sent by mail, to be scattered all over the country.

But some days after this, Mary Grey, who was stopping at the "Reindeer," saw one of these advertisements in a Richmond paper, and smiled in triumph.

"They have scented out a part of the truth," she said. "They have more sharpness than I gave them credit for possessing. They have scented out a part of the truth, but they cannot follow the scent! Ha, ha, ha! They may advertise from now till doomsday; but they will never get a response from him. Let them take the Susquehanna if they can! Perhaps, deep in its mud, they may find what the fishes have left of him!" she said, with a sneer.

But even as she spoke these wicked words, she shuddered with horror.

Meanwhile every day Mr. Lytton and his counsel, Messrs. Berners and Denham, consulted together concerning the proper line of defence to be taken by them.

It is almost needless to say that Messrs. Berners and Denham felt perfectly sure of the absolute guiltlessness of their client, and quite sanguine in their expectations both of a full acquittal of the falsely accused, and of a thorough exposure and successful prosecution of the conspirators.

But as time passed and no answer came to the advertisements for the missing man, both counsel and client began to grow anxious.

The detective who had been sent to Philadelphia to look up evidence for the defence, returned to Wendover with such meagre intelligence, that the hopes of all concerned sank very low.

So overwhelming was the evidence against the accused, that to gain an acquittal it was absolutely necessary either to prove an alibi, or to find the man who had personated Mr. Lytton at the marriage ceremony.

But neither of these most important objects had been yet effected.

No one had been found in Philadelphia, or elsewhere, who had set eyes on Mr. Alden Lytton between the hours of eleven and one, on the fifteenth of the last September, at which time his marriage with Mary Grey was alleged to have taken place.

And no one had answered the advertisements for Craven Kyte.

And what complicated this part of the case still more was the circumstance that Mr. Bastiennelli, the senior partner of the firm in which poor Craven Kyte was once the youngest "Co.," was absent in Europe, where he had been on a visit to his relations for the last two months; so that he could not be consulted as to the probable whereabouts of his former partner.

Meanwhile Mr. Lyle and his young bride Laura did all that they possibly could to comfort and cheer their unfortunate brother and sister.

One or the other of them went every day to Blue Cliffs, to carry to Emma the encouraging news of Alden's continued good health and spirits, and to bring back to him the glad tidings of Emma's heroic patience and cheerfulness.

And in this manner the tedious weeks passed slowly away, and brought the day of the trial.

CHAPTER CXX.

THE TRIAL.

It was a glorious morning in June. All nature seemed exulting in the young summer's splendor.

And any stranger arriving at the town of Wendover that day would have supposed that the population of the whole surrounding country were taking advantage of the delightful weather to hold a gay festival there.

The whole town was full of visitors, come to the great trial.

Mr. Hezekiah Greenfield of the Reindeer Hotel was beside himself under the unusual press of business, and his waiters and hostlers were nearly crazy amid the confusion of arrivals, and the conflicting claims made all at once upon their attention and services.

The scene around the court-house was even more tumultuous.

The court-house was a plain, oblong, two-story edifice, built of the red stone that abounded in the mountain quarries of that district. It stood in a large yard shaded with many trees, and surrounded by a high stone-wall.

In the rear end of this yard stood the county prison.

The court-yard was filled with curious people, who were pressing toward the doors of the court-house, trying to effect an entrance into the building, which was already crammed to suffocation.

In the minister's cottage parlor, at the same early hour, were assembled the Rev. Mr. Lyle, honest John Lytton and his shock-headed son Charley, Joseph Brent, Alden Lytton, and his counsel, Messrs. Berners and Denham.

John Lytton had arrived only that morning. And on meeting his nephew, had taken him by both hands, exclaiming:

"You know, Aldy, my boy, as I told you before, I don't believe the first word of all this. 'Cause it's impossible, you know, for any man of our race to do anything unbecoming of a Lytton and a gentleman. And I think a man's family ought to stand by him in a case like this. So I not only came myself, but I fotch Charley, and if I had had another son, I would a fotched him too. I don't know but I'd a fotched your Aunt Kitty and the girls, only, as I said to them, a trial of this sort an't no proper place for ladies. What do you think yourself?"

"I quite agree with you, Uncle John. And I feel really very deeply touched by the proof of confidence and affection you give me in coming here yourself," said Alden earnestly, pressing and shaking the honest hands that held his own.

And at that moment Mr. Lyle placed in Mr. Alden Lytton's hands a little note from Emma, saying:

"She gave it to me yesterday, with the request that I would hand it to you to-day."

Alden unfolded and read it.

It was only a brief note assuring him of her unwavering faith in Heaven and in himself, and her perfect confidence, notwithstanding the present dark aspect of affairs, in his speedy and honorable acquittal.

He pressed this little note to his lips, and placed it near his heart.

And then Mr. Lyle told him that it wanted but a quarter to ten, the carriages were at the door, and it was time to start for the court-house.

Mr. Lytton nodded assent, and they all went out.

There were two carriages before the cottage gates.

Into the first went the Rev. Mr. Lyle, Mr. Alden Lytton, and his counsel, Messrs. Berners and Denham.

Into the second went Mr. John Lytton, his son Charley, and Mr. Joseph Brent.

The court-house was situated at the opposite end of the town from the parsonage, and was about a mile distant. The gentlemen of this party might easily have walked the distance, but preferred to ride, in order to avoid the curious gaze of strangers who had flocked into the town.

A rapid drive of twenty minutes' duration brought them to the court-house.

The Rev. Mr. Lyle alighted first, and called a constable to clear the way for the party to pass into the court room.

The accused, Alden Lytton, was accommodated with a chair in front of the bench, and near him sat his relatives, John and Charles Lytton, his friends Mr. Lyle and Mr. Brent, and his counsel, Messrs. Berners and Denham.

Judge Burlington sat upon the bench to try the case.

After the tedious preliminaries were over, the accused was arraigned with the usual formula, and—not without some natural scorn and indignation, for he was still too youthful to have learned much self control—answered:

"NOT GUILTY, OF COURSE."

As if he would have added, "You know that quite as well as I myself, and everybody else does."

CHAPTER CXXI.

A HOST OF WITNESSES.

Mr. Martindale, State's Attorney, opened the case for the prosecution with a few brief but very severe remarks upon the baseness of the crime with which the prisoner stood charged, and then called his first witness:

"The Rev. Adam Borden."

Mr. Borden took the stand and testified to having performed the marriage ceremony between Alden Lytton and Mary Grey on the morning of the fifteenth of the preceding September, at his own parish church, in the city of Philadelphia.

He was strictly cross-examined by Mr. Berners, but his testimony only came out the clearer from the ordeal.

John Martin, sexton of the church, and Sarah Martin, his daughter, were successively examined, and testified to having witnessed the marriage ceremony between the parties in question.

They also were cross-examined by Mr. Berners, without detriment to their testimony.

"Mrs. Mary Lytton" was then called upon to come forward for identification.

And Mary Grey, dressed in deep mourning and closely vailed, came up, leaning heavily on the arm of Mr. Philip Desmond, assistant counsel for the prosecution.

At the request of counsel, she drew aside her vail, revealing a face so ghastly pale, that all who gazed upon it shuddered.

Alden Lytton turned to look at her, in order to catch her eyes, but they were fixed upon the ground, and never once raised.

Even he, so deeply injured by her diabolical arts, turned away from her with shuddering pity.

"The woman is at once going mad and dying," he said to himself.

Mary Grey was then fully identified by the three witnesses as the woman who was, at the time and place specified, married to Mr. Alden Lytton.

But she had scarcely stood long enough to be sworn to, when her white face turned blue, and she fell swooning into the arms of Philip Desmond.

She was borne out into the sheriff's room, amid the sympathetic murmurs of the audience.

Mr. Martindale then produced and read the marriage certificate, and recalled the Rev. Mr. Borden, who acknowledged it as his own document, presented to "Mrs. Mary Lytton" immediately after the marriage ceremony had been concluded.

The State's Attorney next produced certain letters, purporting to have been written by Mr. Alden Lytton to Mrs. Mary Grey during the period of his courtship.

These letters, he said, were important as corroborative evidence, and he begged leave to read them to the jury.

He then commenced with the correspondence from the earliest date.

And there in open court he read aloud, one after the other, all those fond, foolish, impassioned letters that the love-sick lad, Alden Lytton, had written to the artful woman who had beguiled him in the earliest days of their acquaintance, and before he had discovered her deep depravity.

This was the severest ordeal Alden Lytton had to bear. For he knew he had written these foolish letters in his romantic boyhood, and in his manhood he felt heartily ashamed of them. Under *any* circumstances he would have been heartily ashamed of them. His ears tingled and his face burned to hear them read aloud to judge, jury and gaping crowd.

And then and there he registered a vow never, *never*, NEVER to write another gushing love-letter so long as he should live if this world, no, not even to his own dear wife.

When the last terrible letter was finished he felt as much relieved as if he had been unbound from the rack.

But his relief was soon superseded by the utmost astonishment when Mr. Martindale took up another parcel, saying:

"The letters that I have just read, your Honor and gentlemen of the jury, were, as you have heard, written from the University of Charlottesville some years ago. Those that I am about to read to you were written from Wendover last year, in the few weeks preceding the marriage of the prisoner with Mary Grey."

And so saying, the State's Attorney proceeded to read, one after the other, all those forged letters which had been executed with inimitable skill by Mary Grey herself, and mailed from Wendover by her unconscious confederate, Craven Kyte.

These counterfeits were even fonder, more foolish and more impassioned than the real ones, and every letter pressed speedy marriage, until the last one, which actually arranged the mode and manner of proceeding:

During the reading of the final letter, Mr. Alden Lytton beckoned his counsel, who approached him.

"I acknowledge the first batch of folly written from Charlottesville, when I was a boy of eighteen or nineteen," said Alden, between a laugh and a blush.

"Every man has been a boy, and a fool, at least once in his life. I know *I* have; and I would much rather be hanged than have *my* letters read," laughingly replied Mr. Berners.

"But, by all my hopes of heaven, I never wrote one of those infernal letters of the last parcel," added Mr. Lytton.

"I never supposed you did. It will, no doubt, be possible to prove them to be forgeries. If we can do that, the whole prosecution breaks down," replied Mr. Berners.

"They *are* forgeries," said Alden Lytton indignantly.

But that was more easily said than established.

A score of witnesses, one after the other, were called, and swore to the handwriting of Mr. Alden Lytton in those letters.

Other witnesses of less importance followed—waiters and chambermaids from the Blank House, Philadelphia, who swore to the fact that Mr. Lytton and Mrs. Grey had taken rooms together at that house on the fourteenth of September, and had left it on the afternoon of the fifteenth.

The prosecuting attorney said that he might call other witnesses who had seen the parties meet as by appointment at the railway station at Forestville, and proceed thence to Richmond, and others again who had seen them together in the Richmond and Washington steamer; but he would forbear: for he felt convinced that the overwhelming amount of testimony already given was more than sufficient to establish the first marriage. The second and felonious marriage was a notorious fact, but for form sake it must be proved before the jury.

And then, to their extreme disgust, the Rev. Stephen Lyle, Joseph Brent and John Lytton were successively called to testify that they had all been present, and witnessed the marriage of the accused, Alden Lytton and Emma Angela Cavendish, on the fifteenth of the last February, at Blue Cliff Hall, in this county and State.

John Lytton, who was the last of the three put upon the stand, came very near being committed for contempt of court by saying, "Yes, he *had* witnessed his nephew's, Mr. Alden Lytton's, marriage with Miss Cavendish, which he had a perfect right to marry her, never having been married before. None of the 'Lyttonses' were capable of any such burglarious, bigamarious conduct as they accused his nephew of. Everybody knew the 'Lyttonses.' The 'Lyttonses' were none of your upstart Judges"—this was aimed directly at the bench. "The 'Lyttonses' was as old as the flood, for that matter!" and so forth, and so forth.

The witness was not committed for this offence, but merely reminded that all this was very irrelevant to the matter in question, and ordered to sit down.

He obeyed, growling at the indignities heaped upon the "Lyttonses" by "upstarts."

State's Attorney Martindale then arose in his place, and opened his argument for the prosecution in a very able review of the evidence that had been given by the witnesses examined, and the documents presented.

It was while he was still speaking that a little disturbance was heard at the lower end of the court room.

All who heard it looked around to see what was the matter.

Presently a bailiff was seen pushing his way up through the crowd.

He came up to the counsel for the accused, and handed a card to Mr. Denham.

That gentleman took it, looked at it, stared at it, changed color, and without a word of explanation, abruptly rose and left his seat, and followed the note bearer through the crowd and out of the court room.

Mr. Berners and Mr. Lytton looked after him, in surprise and curiosity.

State's Attorney Martindale meanwhile went on with his argument.

After an absence of about fifteen minutes, Mr. Denham returned and resumed his seat beside his senior colleague, Mr. Berners.

He gave no explanation of his abrupt departure and absence, but sat there listening attentively to the speech of the prosecuting attorney, and smiling to himself as in silent triumph.

Neither his senior colleague Mr. Berners, nor his client Mr. Lytton, interrupted his reflections, considering that it fell to his duty to follow Mr. Martindale's speech with an opening address for the defence.

At length Mr. Martindale brought his argument to a conclusion by a very brilliant peroration, and sat down, saying that there the prosecution would rest the case.

Mr. Denham, giving his client a reassuring pressure of the hand, and wearing the same strange smile of secret mirth and triumph on his face, arose for the defence. He began by saying:

"Your Honor, and Gentlemen of the Jury: The prosecution has favored us with some able speeches, and has produced a host of witnesses to prove the truth of a false and malicious charge brought against our client. We of the defence have no speech to make, and only one witness to call. Let Craven Kyte be put upon the stand and sworn."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

—Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail, in exclusion of religious principle.

JESSIE'S BOARDER.

BY AMY RANDOLPH.

"There's no other way, Jenny, that I can see, than to take a boarder," said Mrs. Littlefield, to her sister, Miss Jenny Maury.

"Or two or three of 'em," said Jenny soberly, and then added gravely:

"Jessie, tell the honest truth now; don't you sometimes regret that you married at eighteen?"

"No, *indeed*," said Mrs. Littlefield, coloring like a rose, and sending a very emphatic flash out of her soft wine-brown eyes. "Why should I?"

"Oh—because. Gilbert isn't the same man he used to be. I can see that well enough."

"Poor Gilbert isn't well," sighed Jessie, with wife-like extenuation of her husband's faults. "But all this has nothing to do with the question under discussion, Jenny. It is plain enough that Gilbert is not able to work the farm any longer, and we *must* live. So we'll fit up the big front chamber, and take a boarder or two."

"At all events, there's nothing like trying," said cheery Jenny. "Have you spoken to Gilbert yet?"

"No; but I shall do so at once," said Mrs. Littlefield.

Her husband was all alone in the sitting-room when she went down stairs, reclining on a chintz cushioned sofa, with his head on a pillow, and a newspaper in his hand.

"How do you feel to-day, Gilbert?" said she smilingly.

He shook his head.

"There's a very uncomfortable sensation at the pit of my stomach," answered he dolorously, "and a pain in my spinal column. I'm afraid I am not destined to be long-lived."

"It's only the heat of early summer, dear," she suggested; and then she told him her plans relative to increasing their dwindling income by taking a boarder. Mr. Littlefield sank back among his pillows, closing his eyes, with a groan.

"Boarders!" he hollowly echoed. "Boarders! So it has come to that!"

"It would be very little trouble, dear," pleaded his wife, "and would materially add to our funds. Wouldn't it, Jenny, dear?" appealing to her sister, who had just come in with a bunch of fragrant sweet-williams and silver-green southernwood.

"It would be capital fun, I think," said Miss Jenny, who was something of an optimist in her disposition.

"To think," repeated Mr. Littlefield, without opening his eyes, "that it has come to *that!*"

Jenny turned sharply round upon him.

"It needn't have come to that," said she, "if you had stood to your oars, and minded your business like a man, instead of persuading yourself that you had all the diseases in the calendar. You are as well as anybody, Gilbert Littlefield, and I haven't a grain of patience with all your fancied ailments."

"Jenny!" cried the shocked wife.

"It's true!" flashed back defiant Jenny.

"Don't mind her, Jessie," said Mr. Littlefield, with an air of suffering resignation. "Let her hurl abuse at me, if she likes. I am accustomed to that sort of thing. *She* don't know what I have to endure. Yes, Jessie, do as you please."

Jessie Littlefield fitted up the big front room with chintz and muslin and snowy bed linen, until it was pretty and fresh and cozy enough to tempt any one. And at last Mr. Pierce, the fat landlord of the Poseegee Hotel, sent word that "a single gentleman" desired a room and good substantial farm-house board, with attendance; also, that he was willing to pay seven dollars a week for the same.

"Seven dollars!" cried Jessie, the brown eyes sparkling.

"Seven dollars!" echoed Jenny, her blue orbs telegraphing back her responsive satisfaction. "Won't it be nice?"

And she put on her bonnet and shawl at once, to go and tell Mr. Pierce that the offer was accepted.

The new boarder came that self-same afternoon—a fat, short-winded little man, with sharp eyes, and no apparent brows, a double chin, and a voice shrill and high-pitched.

"Ah, ah!" commenced Mr. Pecklethorpe, in which euphonious name the stranger rejoiced. "This is the place. Low land; swamp back of the house; fronts to the west; must be very unhealthy. What d'ye say? My room looks to the south? That's better—one point of the compass better—ha, ha, ha! Up stairs? don't like stairs; interfere with regular action of the heart. No feather-beds for me; husk mattresses, linen sheets, hair pillows. Carpet on the floor? Up it must come. Dust bad for lungs; and I'm a sad invalid. Eh, sir, what's the matter? *You* sick?" as his glance fell for the first time upon Mr. Littlefield's recumbent form. "General decline, eh? no prominent symptoms; general falling away; pains everywhere; nervous system prostrated; lack of appetite? Eh? My case exactly." And Mr. Pecklethorpe ended his long string of sentences with a groan. "But there's one consolation for you and me, sir; we can't live long; our days are numbered. Life's but a shadow!—one comfort, one comfort! And now, ma'am, if you please," to Mrs. Littlefield, "I'll go up to my room, if you'll send one of the boys with my trunks."

Jessie and Jenny carried the long array of trunks, packing cases, bath-tubs, air cushions and invalid chairs up stairs between them, for lack of any other servitor. And Mr. Pecklethorpe could hardly wait to settle himself in his new quarters, before he rushed down stairs with a medical quarto in one hand, and an inhaling apparatus in the other, to compare notes with his host. And when Mrs. Littlefield came in to call them to dinner, she found him reading aloud to her husband, in a shrill, cackling voice, the melancholy diagnosis of some one who had died at seventy-seven years of age, "of exactly our complaint, my dear sir; exactly our complaint."

Mr. Pecklethorpe insisted on Mr. Littlefield trying his electric battery, and administered shock upon shock to the helpless and bewildered Gilbert. Then he brought out the tube of his inhaling apparatus, and declined to allow the wretched patient to breathe, except so many times a minute; and finished the work of torture by applying blisters wherever he could find a spot, until Gilbert Littlefield felt as if he was flayed alive. He read aloud his medical books; he discussed learnedly on the various phases of disease, ancient and modern, and even unpacked a series of hideous colored plates to show Mr. Littlefield the human stomach under numerous abnormal circumstances.

"Better already, are n't you?" said he, viewing Gilbert with an approving glance. "I knew my system couldn't fail. We'll have another turn with electricity to-morrow!"

The morrow dawned—a clear July day, the meadows sparkling with dew, the skies blue and bright as a newly opened violet. Gilbert rose early, and put on his working clothes.

"Are you going out into the hay fields, dear?" anxiously questioned Jessie.

"For a little while."

"But do you feel well enough?"

Littlefield burst into a laugh.

"You seem to think you are talking to that hypochondriac, old Pecklethorpe," said he. "Jessie, I do believe I might possibly have grown to be like *him* in time, if—"

And there Mr. Littlefield broke off.

He spent that morning in the hay field; the whole of the next day; and Mr. Pecklethorpe languished in vain for a subject whereon to experimentalize and harangue.

"Jessie," whispered Miss Maury, with a roguish twinkle in her eyes, "I think Mr. Pecklethorpe has cured Gilbert—though not exactly by electricity."

"By example, rather," said Jessie quietly.

She was right. Mr. Pecklethorpe went away with the autumn frosts, bag and baggage; but he left behind him a far different man than he had found in the person of his host. Gilbert Littlefield had come to his senses, and gentle little uncomplaining Jessie was a happy wife again.

THE NEW YORK LEDGER

ROBERT BONNER, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

NEW YORK, SATURDAY, JUNE 8, 1872.

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The Searching Question—What Shall It Profit a Man?

"What shall it profit a man," asks our Saviour, "though he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

It is well for young men, just starting in life, to keep this question constantly before them, as the guiding star of their business career. If they heed its admonition, it will be sure to direct their feet aright. It implies that men may take advantages which, in the end, will not profit them, and that riches may be accumulated at too great cost.

Some persons try to compensate for making money wrongfully by applying a portion of it to benevolent objects. They seem to think that ten per cent. off for righteousness will atone for any amount of sin.

All such standards of morality are illusory and erroneous. Every transaction in business must stand or fall by its own quality. The same test must be applied to it which would be the correct one if it were the only act of a man's life. We know this is a severe rule; but what authority is there for adopting any other? However difficult it may be, therefore, it is our duty to square our conduct to it.

But principles which might seem, at first, hard to be complied with, become comparatively easy when once fully adopted and adhered to with unexceptionable firmness. Let a young man begin right, and the road before him is smooth as well as straight.

If it is wrong, I will not do it, no matter what is the temptation: let him say this to himself, and the battle of resistance is already half won. Let him ever bear in mind the source from which the question came—that it was asked by one who knew the awful solemnity of the inquiry—"What shall it profit a man, though he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

It matters not what the amount of the advantage may be, even if it were the whole world, it shall not profit a man to gain it by any violation of his conscience. He is richer who has nothing, and feels that he has wronged no one, than the possessor of broad acres and of millions of dollars dishonestly acquired. Whatever advantages wealth may possess, there is something else of a still higher value.

◆

On the Wrong Side of the Bride.

A man named COON was recently tried in New Jersey for polygamy. One of the witnesses to his first marriage testified that all he remembered about the ceremony was that "COON got on the wrong side of the bride!"

ALEXANDER MUCKY, another witness, who married a sister of COON'S, was ludicrously lacking in precision in his recollections of his own marriage, its incidents, etc. He "testified that he lived at Elizabeth; he married COON'S sister; could not tell how long he had been married; he had three or four children; there were four when he counted last; could not tell where he was married; thought he was married at his wife's father's house; that was at Stoney Hill; don't know where it was, or in what county; he was a seafaring man; when he went to see his wife he took a train on the Morris and Essex, got out at Madison and tramped across the country to Mr. COON'S house."

◆

How Hard to Bear!

There are some who cannot join in the petition to be "delivered from sudden death." Our own prolonged physical pain of body, and the final parting with those who are dependent upon us—O how hard to bear! *This* needs more faith and courage than many a true Christian can always summon, although he can truthfully answer Yes to the searching question, "Lovest thou Me?"

◆

An Old Subscriber.

MR. JOEL DUNHAM, of Raritan, New Jersey, recently called at the office of the *New Brunswick Fredonian* to pay his *fifty-second* annual subscription to that journal.

We hope the *Ledger* will one day number on its books many subscribers who will call and pay us their subscription at the beginning of their fifty-second year.

◆

Two Kinds of Giving.

There is more virtue in the small pittance bestowed by some poor, hard-working servant in charity, than in the thousands given by some millionaire, whose generosity is trumpeted the length and breadth of the land. In truth it might be questioned, in many instances, whether it were right to receive the mite so hardly earned, were it not that in this lesson of self-sacrifice "it is more blessed to give than to receive."

◆

A Street Nuisance.

Is there any law bearing on the jingling cow-bells attached to the rag carts that infest our streets? If so, in the name of the sick people who are tortured by them, let it be speedily enforced. Both the sick and the convalescent have suffered long enough from their jangling discord.

What will Happen if it does Not Rain.

Whenever there has been an unusual length of time without rain, the people in the country are in the habit of complaining, and of wondering what will happen if the weather continues so dry. It does not appear to occur to them that the weather is in good hands, that it is sure to be well managed, and that there are plenty of other things which they might busy themselves about more advantageously. At all events, it is hardly worth while for them to worry themselves about that.

It *will* rain, and rain in due time; that may always be depended upon. Such a thing as a general failure of crops in this part of the world, from drought or any other cause, is unknown. In the product of some particular article, as hay, or corn, or wheat, or oats, there is occasionally a great difference, in seasons, and more or less variance in the general average; but we always have enough of something.

There are some practical objections to the practice of complaining about the weather. In the first place, the habit of fretfulness, on any subject, is a disagreeable one.

Again, those who are always finding fault with the weather are very apt to neglect many things which they might do to guard against the injurious effects of its extremes. The farmer who plows deep and cultivates highly, finds the moisture below which his indolent neighbor sighs for in vain from above.

Finally there seems to us something irreverent, if not impious, in a presumptuous criticism of that which is conducted with a wisdom which is not only superhuman, but even above human comprehension.

◆

Found Dead in His Bed.

In these latter days, the above heading appears in the daily papers with startling and impressive frequency. There seems to be no part of the country which is exempt from the sudden visitation of death. In the remotest hamlets, as well as in the most crowded cities, people who at evening retire to rest in seeming health, are found dead in their beds in the morning. It is little cause for wonder that one whose bed is a heap of rags in the basement of a tenement house in the slums of New York, should be found dead in it. The wonder is that any one should ever be found alive in a lair that so reeks with the atmosphere of death. But it is startling and incongruous that one whose couch is spread beneath the roof of a farm-house among New England hills, or on some breezy prairie of the West, and who had gone to rest full of robust life, should be found dead in his bed. But so it is. The end cometh in an hour that no man knoweth, on the hill-side and in the valley, as well as in the crowded mart, and in the abodes of virtue as well as in the haunts of vice. Orators often thrill their hearers by picturing the power of the Cæsars, who could lay their iron hand upon a fugitive though he fled to the uttermost parts of the earth; but Death has a longer reach and a surer hand than was vouchsafed to the Roman emperors, and a touch beneath which the last of the Cæsars was himself long since found dead in his bed.

◆

A West India Massacre.

The captain of the schooner *Flirt*, who recently arrived at this port from Martinique, West Indies, brings intelligence of a wholesale murder on that island, which throws the worst cases of homicide in New York into the shade. A gendarme, who was patrolling the French settlement of St. Peters, early on the morning of the murder, saw three men escaping steathily in the darkness from a house, and hastening toward the beach. Obtaining assistance, he launched a whale-boat and followed the fugitives, who were making off in a sail-boat. They were overtaken, and handcuffed after a desperate struggle. The gendarme then took them back to the shore, and visited the house from which he had seen them steal away. It was the residence of a gentleman named John Fougier, and in it were found ten corpses. The entire family had been murdered. Their bodies were frightfully mangled. They had just inherited six million of francs—about one million two hundred thousand dollars—from relatives in Bordeaux, France. The murderers were a man who claimed to be an heir to the estate, and two accomplices. They were sent to France for trial.

◆

A Carnivorous Mule.

Boone county, Missouri, is represented as a remarkably fertile region. If its other productions equal the stories which emanate from that quarter, they must be unrivalled.

Witness the following account of a sheep-eating mule, from the Centralia *Fireside Companion*:

"Mr. Fred. Jones, residing some eight miles south-west of this place, is the owner of a thrifty four-year-old mule. One of his neighbors, it appears, has been gradually missing his sheep, and supposed that the dogs or wolves were devouring them; not in the least placing suspicion on the mule, it, as a matter of course, was not watched. This work went on until, one day last week, the children were returning from school, and behold, the mule he was engaged in making a meal on sheep and grass alternately, that is, a bite of mutton, and then a nip of grass. Our informant states that on hearing a sheep bleat, this mule will leave its kindred and go in search of its prey."

◆

Death from Joy.

There have been many instances of death from excessive joy. Many years ago a door-keeper of the United States Senate fell and expired on hearing announced the passage of a measure in which he had been very deeply interested.

A few days ago an old gentleman from Baden arrived at Saugerties, and was so overjoyed at meeting his six sons there, that he fainted and died.

◆

Flower Thieves.

It is little comfort, in New York, to cultivate beautiful flowers, shrubs or trees, as no precaution avails against the thieving fingers of juvenile marauders, which never leave a bud or blossom, that is within reach, unplucked. It would be a good thing for the police to make an example or two of these children, by a night in the station-house, without regard to their dress, parentage, or social position.

◆

A Sheep Charmed by a Snake.

[From the Poughkeepsie Press.]

A sheep, owned by Mr. J. G. Fulton, at Mongaup Valley, Ulster county, was charmed by a milk snake. The animal was observed by Mr. Fulton apart from the flock, standing in a peculiar attitude so long, near a ledge of rocks, that he went to see what was the matter, when he discovered its attention directed to the snake. He succeeded in bringing down his snakeship. But the sheep acted strangely, and would not go with the flock, and finally fled to the woods, since which time it has been neither seen nor heard of.

ALL HAIL!

BY HENRY WARD BEECHER.

There are many charms connected with the ideal life of the tropics. The chief drawback is, that *manhood* deliquesces and runs out under the Equator. This is not paid for by luscious bananas, oranges, orchids, or ever-blooming vines and trees. Enjoyment palls when it flows unceasingly and without break. To live in summer for ever, without one ungarlanded hour in the year, might, for aught we know, sate us with sweetness.

The tropics were not made to live in all the year. They are a refuge for one or two months. After frost and snow have had their full meal, and the northern winds have by familiarity bred contempt and influenzas, it is a good thing to go to sleep on the good steamer Moro Castle, and wake up in Cuba, or Jamaica, or to go on through the Gulf of Mexico to the Magdalena valley in Northern South America, which the painter Church once told me he regarded as the most perfect climate that he had ever found in all his travels.

But as soon as the contrast is satisfied, we are sure that one in the tropics must long for the northern zones—northern fruits and northern flowers; for calm days without pestilent insects; for *grass*, and for DANDELIONS!

Now I have got upon my real subject. The foregoing sentences were in the nature of a rhetorical introduction—a sly and adroit way of getting people to listen to the praises of one of the brightest charms of our northern spring days.

I am moved to celebrate this brilliant, and yet, I fear, not much-prized flower, from the glory of my morning view. Out of my back windows I look down on four or five grassy yards, all well kept and lying well open to the sun. Soon after the grass springs you shall see such a gorgeous array of dandelions as might make a florist fairly envious! They jut out from the edges of the walks, they crowd the narrow strips of grass at the lower end, they fairly jostle each other like a crowd pouring out of a public hall, in their strife to get into the light and open their golden crowns to the sun.

So brilliant are they and so hardy, that we are apt to miss the sentiment that lives in them. They are not of the flowers that impudently push themselves forward, demanding us to look at them whether we will or no.

With all their amazing brilliancy, they are still coy love flowers, that wait for the sun, as a bride for the bridegroom. For dandelions do not wake up in the morning before we do. They wait till the sun has long called them, and then they fling open their golden disks, and shine with a real delight of existence, with a cheer and abundance which ought to strike joy into the heart of a misanthrope.

Soon after noon is at its highest, the dandelion, thinking that the world is bright enough, and that the sun can manage the rest of the day, folds up itself, laces the golden filaments with the green lepals, and retires to meditation. Thus it plays courtier in the morning, and nun in the afternoon.

But what a name! *Dens leonis!* or *Dent-de-lion!* Or, if you fly to the Systematic name, the harsh *Taraxacum!* Shall such a home loving, radiant creature be called *Lion's Tooth*, because some impertinent, prying botanist fancied that he had espied among its minor forms the shape of a lion's tooth?

Just as soon as we have got politics settled, business reformed, human nature elevated, Mr. BONNER, I am determined to form a society for the reformation of Botanical names. Botany has been the Noah's Ark of pedants. Every absurd whim of every pragmatical Professor has been turned into Greek or Latin, and hung about the neck of unhappy flowers. One might as well hang a Dictionary around a child's neck by way of ornament, as to impose on flowers such outrageous and outlandish names as now defend the science of Botany from all approach, as a fort is defended by a line of chevaux-de-frise. But blessings on those cheery children of the sun! They are born of brightness; their whole life is like a smile of love.

They are not a flower for the hand; they are not to be worn in the bosom. They do not love the house, or the pressure of a close bouquet. Their life is in the free open air. They shine out on you along your daily walk. They crowd your yard with golden coin, which, good for nothing in the market, yet may have the power to confer more enjoyment than could golden dollars or ducats.

This is my annual tribute. To-day I look out of my window, and thank God for the gifts which He sends me by the hand of Dandelions! Do they know my thoughts as I gaze on them? Is there not some sympathy between things in nature which wake up the soul to delight, and aid the soul thus aroused?

Behind signs and signals, back of all articulate utterance, may there not be a subtler relationship which will yet be discovered, as connecting the inward and the outward with a living relationship?

If the Revelator John had lived in a land where dandelions blossom, it might be surmised what he meant when he described heaven as paved, or rather planted, with gold!

◆

A MAN OF HONOR.

A man of honor! What a glorious title that is! Who would not rather have it than any that kings can bestow? It is worth all the gold and silver in all the earth. He who merits it wears a jewel within his soul, and needs none upon his bosom. "His word is as good as his bond." If there were no law in the land, one might deal just as safely with him.

To take unfair advantage is not in him; to quibble and guard his speech, so that he leads others to suppose that he means something that he does not mean, even while they can never prove that it is so, would be impossible to his frank nature. His speeches are never riddles. He looks you in the eye, and says straight out the thing he has to say, and he does unto others as he would that others should do unto him.

And it is not only in business that the man shows a right to his glorious title. Who ever saw the man of honor engaged in a little affair of the heart with another man's wife? Who ever heard him betray the little faults and follies of his friends, or speak slightingly of his near kindred? Who ever knew him to "kiss and tell," or to boast of his conquests? and who ever knew him to carry on one of those rascally little flirtations always easily entered into with simple-hearted and affectionate women, who always believe the men they love to be men of honor, in which love is made by glances and vague speeches and sly kisses; and while trying to win a heart, the wooer keeps for himself a loop-hole by which to escape when he is weary of the fun? Why, the man of honor could no more do that than he could steal his neighbor's purse.

The man of honor is always a good son, and a good brother, and, when the time comes, makes an excellent husband. Making the vow to love and cherish and protect, with a perfect comprehension of its holiness, he never breaks it; and what woman need fear to promise to obey a man of honor?

Heaven be thanked, that amid the rascals and tricksters of this world, there are a few such men left. They may not be rich or celebrated, though they often are, but they are certain to be loved and respected by all who know them. And when you look into their bright, fearless eyes—eyes that never shun yours, having never had need to fear the eye of mortal man—you are pretty sure to recognize them for what they are, if you have a soul that is worth anything yourself. M. K. D.

◆

—A more glorious victory cannot be gained over another man than this, that when the injury began on his part, the kindness should begin on ours.

THE FIVE KNAVES.

AN ORIENTAL TALE.

BY JOHN G. SAXE.

Once on a time, in Indostan,
A thief conceived a cunning plan,
(So potent is the voice of Hope,)
To save his throttle from the rope,
Though now the day was drawing nigh
When he by law was doomed to die.
He bade the jailer tell the King
He fain would show a wondrous thing—
A precious secret fairly worth
The ear of any prince on earth.
And now the culprit being led
Into the royal presence, said,
"This golden coin which here you see,
If planted, will become a tree
Whose fruit—increased a hundred fold—
Will be,—like this—the purest gold.
I pray your Majesty to try
If this be true before I die."
With this, the King and courtiers went
Into the garden with intent
To plant the curious coin of gold:
But now, when all was ready, "Hold!"
Exclaimed the thief—"this hand of mine
Would surely spoil our whole design.
The hand that plants the gold must be
(Else all is naught) entirely free
From stain of fraud; and so I pray
Your Gracious Majesty will lay
The seed in earth." "Yes—no—in sooth!"
The King replied, "for in my youth
I pilfered from my Sire; some stain,
For all my sorrow, may remain.
My good Prime Minister is here;
His hand, no doubt, is wholly clear
Of any taint." "Nay," he replied,
"That 's more than I can well decide;
As Tax-Receiver—now—I may
Have kept a trifle. So I pray
To be excused—for prudence' sake,
And let our Commissary take
The coin in hand. Sure that were best,
For he, no doubt, can stand the test."
"Faith!" said the Commissary, "I
Would rather not. I can't deny
My good intent; but since I pay
Large sums of money every day
For soldiers, sailors, and a herd
Of spies—I wouldn't give my word
I have not kept a small amount
Not entered in my book account.
Since any error—e'en the least—
Would spoil the charm, pray let the *Priest*
Proceed to plant the coin of gold."
"Nay, that I fear were over-bold;
Despite my prayers and pious zeal,"
Replied his Reverence,—"I deal
In tithes and sacrificial dues;
And so I beg you will excuse
My sharing in a work like this,
Where nothing must be done amiss."
"Faith!" said the thief, "since no man here
(As we have learned) is wholly clear
Of knavish tricks, I ask you whether
We should not all be hung together?"
The monarch, laughing, made reply,
"Why, yes, if every rogue must die!
Well—since we five are knaves confest,
I pardon you—and spare the rest!"

◆

AN UNRELIABLE COMET.

BY JUDGE CLARK.

We were a knot of passengers on a snow-bound train, on the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad. A prospect of soon getting under way again had revived our spirits, and set our tongues going.

After an interchange of views on the succession to the Presidency, and several other topics having been canvassed and exhausted, Professor O'Rion introduced the Plantamour comet.

"What would be the effect on the earth of collision with such a body?" asked a substantial looking gentleman, with, probably, a land-owner's interest in the question.

"To smash it to flinders," was the opinion of a passenger, who appealed, in support of it, to one or two personal experiences on the Erie Railroad.

"And reduce its population to a *comet*-ose state," chuckled Mr. Gigglesweet.

The Professor, shocked at this verbal atrocity, glared glassily at the speaker through his spectacles.

"What is most repugnant," said the Senator—we had one among us—"what is most repugnant, in contemplating such a catastrophe, is the thought that it would leave us without a posterity to go down to. The man who has achieved distinction can afford to meet death, under ordinary circumstances, with composure, assured that his fame will live after him. But to blot out the race, obliterate history, and uncreate our planet—the idea is intolerable, sir, and I protest against it! But I beg pardon, Professor, we were waiting to hear *your* views."

The Professor's views were far too numerous to mention. Comets, it was agreed by the learned, might be solid, or they might be gaseous. They might be running on time, or they might not. They might collide with other heavenly bodies, or steer clear. If solid, in case of collision with our globe, it would be a simple question of strength of materials which would get the worst of it. If gaseous, probably no harm would be done—unless, indeed, the gas proved inflammable and set us on fire, or absorbed our caloric and left us to freeze. It was plain the Professor, like many other scientific Bunsbys, knew too much to know anything. He could give you all the *theories*, but which was the *true* one was other people's business, not his.

"If one only had reliable private information beforehand," remarked a Broad-street broker, "what a splendid 'point' might be made by selling 'short;' delivery to be made the day after the crash."

"Don't you never try *that*, stranger!" broke in an old miner just from the diggings. "Don't you never go for to resk *your* money on a comet."

"Why not?" asked the broker.

"'Cause I've *seed* that elephant."

There was a general expression of curiosity, and the stranger being invited to explain, proceeded:

"In the year eighteen hundred and thirty-odd, I was the owner of a vallyable track o' land in what is now the heart of Injinoplis; an' ef I'd kep it, I d a ben to-day the richest man in Injyanny. But that year a comet was advertised to come off on the last day of July, which was to set the world afire, an' wind up the consarn on true orthydox principles.

"At the fust go off, I sot it down as a Whig lie, got up to keep Dimmycrats from the polls. But Elder Spohn, as stanch a friend of old Hick'ry as never scratched a ticket, got up a revival on the stren'th of it, and I'd great faith in the Elder. Bein' a pious man and consistent Dimmycrat, I know'd ef *he* backed the comet, it must be all right politically.

"I was beginnin' to feel a good deal jubus, when Bill Jeter come over one day with a bunch of green oats in his hand.

"'Hev you nodiced the oats this season?' sez Bill, switchin' his leg with the handful he held.

"'Not perticklar,' sez I, 'more 'n to obsarve we 're like to hev a fair crop.'

"'Ef we're only spared to reap 'em,' sez Bill.

"'Jest so,' sez I.

"'Only look at that,' sez Bill, smoothin' out one of the blades in his hand, and holdin' it up to the light. 'Look at that B,' sez he, speakin' as solemn as the Elder himself could a done.

"I looked, an' what do you think I seed? Why, as plain a capital B on that 'ere blade of oats, as ever was prented!

"'None o' yer foolin', Bill,' sez I. 'It 's too serous a subjec'. You've done that letterin' yerself,' sez I.

"'Dog my cat ef I did!' sez Bill. 'Jest you look at these yer,' sez he, holdin' out the rest o' the bunch; 'an' jest come out to the field, an' you 'll find the same on every spear that's growin'.'

"Sure enough it was so! What that B stood for there was no mistakin'. There was only one thing it *could* stand for, an' that was 'BURN!'

"Goin' back to the house, I passed through the barn-yard, an' stopped to take a look into the goose nest, where I found an egg as usual. I picked it up to fotch it along, when I seed somethin' onto it as fairly made my hair raise my hat off! May I never sin ef there wasn't writ on that egg, in riz letters, which was part o' the shell, these indentical words: '*To sech as it may consarn—this yarth'll be destroyed by fire on the thirty-first of July next, at twelve o'clock punctooal.*'

"It ud take a better scholar nor me to describe my feelin's. When I got to the house, I sed nothin' to my wife; for I know'd, ef she found out the comet was comin' in airnest, she'd find some excuse for blamin' me with it.

"That night I thought things over. Jabe Potter 'd been dickerin' at me for some time to buy my place. He'd offered me six dollars an acre, an' I'd ben holdin' out for ten. My wife too 'd ben a teasin' of me to sell an' move to town. She'd an ambition, you see, to be as fine as Pop Wheeler, whose husband kept the villidge grocery.

"So I made up my mind I'd walk over in the mornin' an' take Jabe up—that is, purvidin' he'd make it cash down, an' no back payments. I was a little afeard he mought a hearn about what was onto the oats, an' so be offish; but Jabe, I know'd, was an onbelievin' critter, an' the important secret of the egg lay in my own breast.

"I felt as ef I could die contenteder ef I only got the better of Jabe, by enticin' him into a land trade on the eve of a gineral smash in reel estate; for he'd cheated me once peskily in a hoss swap, an' I'd ben itchin' ever sence to git even with him.

"Jabe was a leetle surprised at me comin' to his terms so easy; but he jumped at the offer, an' the deed was signed and the money paid the same day.

"Well, we moved into town, my wife an' me; an' my wife—to keep peace in the fam'ly, I never spoke of the comet to her—she took the shine out o' Pop Wheeler to her heart's content. I let her hev whatever she wanted; an' made believe, for a blind, I was engaged in permiskus speckilation, though I took care to close no bargains—my sole objec' bein' to hev the good o' my money, an' come out square by the last o' July.

"On the appinted day, my wife went out visitin'; while I retired to my room with my hyme-book an' a bottle o' Bourbon, an' between the two was soon lost to arthly considerations.

"The next sensation I exper'enced was of bein' shook vi'lently, an' hearin' myself called by name. The first I attribbyted to the comet, the second to a angel. But I soon discovered my mistake. It was my wife in both instances. I'd never seed her in such a rage before. Her an' Pop Wheeler 'd met that day, an' Pop hed on a new bunnet, jest imported from New York, an' 'd ben a puttin' on airs over my wife.

"'Give me fifty dollars this minnit!' she screamed. "I'll teach that good-for-nothin' trollop to turn up her nose at *me*. I'll hev the best bunnet in New York, as quick as hoss an' steam power kin fetch it, or know the reason why,' sez she.

"Fifty *dollars!*—I'd invested my last fifty *cents* in that bottle o' speritooal comfort. I looked at the clock. It was past three, an' the comet hadn't come. *I wished it had.*

"What passed between me an' my wife, when the facts come out, I leave to such on you as is heads o' families to imagine. The upshot o' the matter was I was larfed out o' the settlement."

"That inscription on the egg," remarked the Professor, "was a curious freak of nature though."

"Freak o' fiddlestick!" exclaimed the stranger. "All a put up job between Jabe an' Bill Jeter. Bill was up to all sorts o' tricks, as he'd larnt, when a boy, instid of his prayers. An' one of 'em was to write somethin' with grease onto an egg, an' then drap it into vinegar, which 'd eat down the shell, except where the grease was. Bill, the skunk, he'd fixed that goose egg that way, an' I was goose enough to be took in by it."

"But the letter on the oats?" queried the Professor.

"Well, stranger," said the miner, "that mark, somethin' like a B, I reckon 's been onto every blade of oats as ever growed sence the foundation of the world, only I never noticed it afore."

"I trust you have succeeded in repairing your fortunes," benevolently observed the Professor.

"Well, I was banged about from pillar to post for a good many years," was the answer; "but out yer I struck a streak o' luck at last," giving his money belt a slap, "an' the next comet as ever I take stock in 'll hev to come close enough fust to sprinkle salt on its tail."

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THE NEW ENGLAND WOMAN.

As if one could mistake a New England woman! How can you know her? First, by her wardrobe. She will own a water-proof and india-rubbers, and nice umbrella, before thinking about a diamond ring, or the last style of dress hat or gold bracelet. She always dresses with a view to the thermometer, and prefers a blanket shawl of the best fabric, under doubtful skies, to a silk velvet dress and paper-soled boots.

Before deciding on her spring outfit, she looks at the capabilities of the dresses already on hand. Over one that has a spot upon it, she places a bow, or ruffle; over another, a new "top skirt," thus saving the cost of making two dresses at least. She buys the materials for two bonnets, and makes them herself, with the garnishing of flowers and feathers, quite as tastefully as the best milliner could do. She owns boots and shoes for all kinds of weather, before buying brooches or silk stockings; also a good assortment of plain but well-made under-clothes, before "hankering" after a *real* Cashmere shawl.

She has a well-stocked library, though not owning a "point-lace overdress" for a party.

When she has dressed for the hour of the day and the occasion, according to the best of her judgment—and very good judgment it is too—she never insults your common-sense by apologizing for not being dressed in a different manner. In short, after being neatly and tastefully arrayed for the hour, her mind has no further interest in the subject, but has opportunity to consider more important needs.

If you chance to bruise your fingers, the New England woman has a healing remedy at hand. If your character is said to be bruised, she will require proof of the same before she believes it, or turns you the cold shoulder.

The New England woman puts away her furs before the moths get at them, and her cellar floor is as clean as that of her parlor. In short, she is a woman possessing all the virtues and none of the weaknesses of her sex who have the misfortune to be born *out* of New England. *I* myself am a New England woman! FANNY FERN.

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[From the New York Times.]

The Fastest Half Mile ever Made on Fleetwood—1:04½.

Yesterday morning Mr. Bonner's young stallion *Startle*, who was only five years old on the 14th inst., driven by Mr. George Hopkins, trotted half a mile on Fleetwood Park in the marvellous time of 1:04½. This is the fastest half mile by two seconds ever made in harness on Fleetwood by any horse of any age. Indeed it is the fastest half mile by two seconds ever made in harness by any horse except *Dexter*, who once trotted half a mile in exactly the same time. Startle was timed by Mr. Thomas Carpenter of Hartford, Mr. Gillender, Mr. McGowan, and other gentlemen. On Friday last he trotted a full mile on Prospect Park in 2:19¾, when he was timed by Commodore Dodge and Messrs. Fletcher and Hoagland. That was the fastest mile that has yet been made this season. Startle is a brother in blood to *Dexter*. Mr. Bonner paid $20,000 for him in the fall of 1870; but to-day good judges consider him worth $100,000.

GOING A MAYING.

BY MARY KYLE DALLAS.

O come, go a Maying with me,
And dance round the whitewash pole!
Dusty wretches are we,
But if company can console—
Tra-lal-la !—
We 've plenty of comfort, you see.

There rushes Brown with his clock!
Hark! down the street it goes, tick-a-tack.
There all the Perkinses flock,
Bearing their china and brick-a-brack—
Tra-lal-la !—
Every small smashable nick-a-nack.

There are cobwebs wreathed in your tresses,
And kalsomine scattered in mine;
Louise packed away all your best dresses,
And we cannot guess when we shall dine.
Tra-lal-la !—
Isn't going a Maying divine?

O the beautiful, bright May day!
Where is the old umbrella?
Do you think we can carry the cat,
Done up in a bundle, Bella?—
Tra-lal-la !—
Whew! how she scratches a feller.

O come, go a Maying with me,
And keep up a cheerful heart,
For whatever is cracked must be;
We must learn from our glass ware to part,
Tra-lal-la!
When May-day comes with its cart.

We will eat bread and cheese in a corner,
And thank Heaven for all that is whole;
We 'll buy a new tea-pot to-morrow,
And hire a new Biddy, my soul—
Tra-lal-la !—
Let us dance round the whitewash pole.

MARK HEBER'S LUCK;

OR,

Life on the Plains.

By LEON LEWIS,

AUTHOR OF "THE BOY MAGICIAN," "RED KNIFE,"
"THE BROKEN HOME," "EDDY'S SEARCH,"
"THE CLUB-FOOT BEAR," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXXI.

UPON THE LONG JOURNEY HOMEWARD.

The instant the alarm of Indians rang through the affrighted camp, Burk leaped to his feet, with a swift, keen glance around him.

The savages were close at hand. They had tethered their horses half a mile away, and crept up on foot in the shelter of a belt of trees, and their approach had not been detected by the drowsy guards until they were almost upon the sleeping camp.

Burk uttered a wild yell, a preconcerted signal with his Indian comrades, and with fierce shouts and whoops, they rushed toward him, gathering about him in the very camp itself.

A horrible confusion followed.

The women and children screamed; the men flew to arms; the conductor shouted in vain to the emigrants, who did not hear him, and all the terrible din of a savage attack pervaded the scene.

Some of the emigrants fled in their terror, rushing down the bank of the river, and throwing themselves flat upon the ground at the water's edge, hoped to remain unseen. Others hid in the bushes on the banks. The attack had been sudden and unexpected—a complete surprise. The panic it produced was horrible.

Isabel Holley sprang from the wagon of her friends half dressed, her long black hair flowing over her shoulders, and rushed out into the very midst of the tumult, utterly dazed and bewildered.

She saw Burk, his savage friends behind him, plundering and shooting, and remembered even then having seen him in conversation with Governor Kent that very day. She rushed toward him, shrieking and imploring.

Burk's face lighted up with a lurid glow. He seized the girl and said something in the Dacota tongue to one of the warriors, who caught the girl in his arms.

Her screams became frantic.

While they still filled the air, Governor Kent, revolver in hand, his noble figure towering, his eyes aflame, came bounding toward Burk and the girl, with the determination to effect her release.

He fired at the savages twice—thrice—and one of them reeled and fell. Burk sprang forward, two Indians close at his heels. A moment later, Governor Kent was also a prisoner in the hands of the Indians.

These incidents had occurred in less time than it has taken to record them. The first amazement of the emigrants had not passed—they had not yet recovered their courage and self-possession—when the two prisoners, Miss Holley and Governor Kent, were hustled out at the rear end of the camp in charge of two brawny savages and Burk, and marched swiftly down the river bank to the spot where the horses were in waiting.

The remaining savages, under the guidance of Red Adder, who had received a few hints from Burk in the instant before the appearance of Isabel Holley, went on in their task of fighting and plundering.

Under cover of the general conflict at the camp, Burk hurried his prisoners to the spot where the horses of the Indians were tethered. Their hands were secured with thongs behind their backs, and they were hastily mounted. Both the Governor and Miss Holley were strapped to their horses, in addition to their other bonds.

Burk then hastily mounted and seized the horses of the prisoners by the long running straps, and after some more words to the two savages, rode briskly away to the eastward.

The two Indians remained on guard over the horses.

The savages under Red Adder continued their deadly work at the camp. The emigrants rallying, a fight was raging whose issue none could foresee. The ringing of rifle shots came to the ears of Burk and his companions, as they rode away in the distance.

Governor Kent had not submitted weakly to the iron hands of his captors. He had fought and struggled like a hero, but his years and his life of ease were not favorable to the development of muscle, and his assailants had handled him easily. For some time he rode on in bitter silence, but when the noises of the camp were left behind he looked at Burk and said sternly:

"Are you not Mr. Smith of Colorado, with whom I conversed some hours since?"

"Yes," said Burk unconcernedly. "That 's the name I was travelling under during the last two days, Gov'nor. Mr. John Smith of Mississip' Ranche, Colorado."

"Is that your real name, sir?"

"Wall, no, it an't, old hoss," answered Burk coolly. "I 've got a hundred names, more or less. You may have heard of me under the name of 'Light Fingers,' or 'Light-fingered Burk.' That 's my name, sir—Burk!"

"Are you connected with the savages?" asked the Governor.

"I s'pose I be," assented Burk, rather proudly. "I'm j'int leader of them red-skins you saw to-night."

The Governor looked his loathing and contempt of the base ruffian.

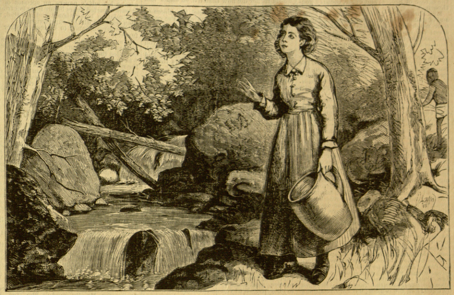
"I took you for an honest man," he said. "How could I suspect that there was a white man living vile enough and base enough to enter a camp of honest emigrants as a spy of savages? You betrayed us to the Indians. You are a thousand times worse than they—"

"I don't want to hear no preaching, Gov'nor," interrupted Burk sullenly. "It won't go down with me. If you keep a still tongue between your teeth you shall be treated respectful; but if you rile me, I won't answer for what 'll happen."

Miss Holley moaned and wept, too terror-stricken still to collect her thoughts, or to think of her future.

After half an hour's brisk ride, Burk forded the river with his prisoners, and struck out for the northward at a steady jog.

"Where are you taking us?" asked Governor Kent, after a long silence.



GAY HEBER, AT THE SPRING, HEARS MARK'S SIGNAL.

"Up to the Sioux country, more than two hundred miles from here," replied Burk doggedly.

Miss Holley uttered a faint scream.

"O dear! O dear!" she moaned. "I can never bear the journey. And I am so afraid of the Indians! I shall die on the way. Oh, Mr. Burk, do let me go! I'll give you my watch and chain and rings. Oh, do, in Heaven's name, let me go free!"

"Can't see it," said Burk. "I've set out to take you, and take you I will."

"What do you intend to do with Miss Holley?" inquired Governor Kent. "What good can it do you to carry off a young lady into captivity? What will you gain by it?"

"Wall, you see," said Burk, "I was listening to what you and she said about her father being a rich land speculator out in Denver. Now if he 's rich, and thinks so much of her as she pretends, he 'll pay a big pile to get her back. If he don't want to buy her back, why, she 'll be cared for. She 's a regular beauty, that's what she is, and she won't have to wait long for suitors. If Blue Jack wasn't married already to an Indian wife, I'm sure he 'd want her."

Miss Holley screamed.

"Are you a friend of Blue Jack?" demanded the Governor.

"I'm his right-hand man," said Burk importantly. "He lives up among the Sioux, and we are travelling up to his place as straight as we can travel."

"I had rather die than become the prisoner of Blue Jack!" moaned Miss Holley piteously. "He's so terrible! Oh, I'm afraid of him! I've heard so much of his wickedness. Oh, Mr. Burk, do let me go! Please release me! I have money and jewelry. Take them, and let me go!"

"I don't mind taking them," said Burk, "but we don't pick up rich and pretty girls every day. Blue Jack won't hurt you. Don't cry them pretty eyes out. It won't do no good. I sha'n't release you!"

Miss Holley sobbed in anguish, the tears streaming down her cheeks.

"Be calm, Miss Holley," said the Governor. "The man suggests that you will be released on the payment of ransom money. You will not be harmed. Bear up bravely. Do not waste your strength in unavailing tears."

Miss Holley paid no heed to this friendly counsel, but continued to sob and weep in utter distraction.

"Do you intend to hold me also for ransom, Mr. Burk?" inquired the Governor presently.

"We 'll see," replied Burk gruffly. "I had a reason in carrying you off, Gov'nor, and 'twan't a money reason, nuther. I'm going to make you a present to Blue Jack, and he can do as he pleases with you. 'Tan't no use to ask what my reason is; I sha'n't tell you. I don't know as I rightly understand it myself, but it seems to me that you are worth more to Blue Jack than all the train besides."

The Governor looked amazed.

"I have never seen Blue Jack," he said, "and he has probably never heard of me. I have nothing in common with a border outlaw, a thief, scoundrel and murderer! Why should you think I would be worth more to him than the plunder of the wagon train?"

"That 's what I won't answer," said Burk. "You 'll know when you find out. Just you hang on in patience until you see Blue Jack, and hear what he has to say, that 's all."

The Governor could not elicit any further information from his captor, and puzzled his brain to guess how the custody of his person should be important and desirable to the border desperado.

Burk's idea in the matter can be easily explained.

He had heard Governor Kent narrate his story to Isabel Holley, and had been struck with it, and especially excited by the mention of the name of the Governor's missing grandchild—Gabrielle, or Gay.

He had never heard the name before but as applied to one single person, and that person was Gay Heber.

The thought had flashed upon his sluggish soul that Gay Heber might be the missing Gabrielle Kent.

Now, as we have said, Burk was not over-intelligent. He was, as has been remarked, more a ruffian than a villain. He was an efficient hand to Blue Jack's head. He obeyed orders with unscrupulous fidelity, but he had scarcely ever been known to originate even a simple scheme of plunder. Such as he was, and just as he was, he was more valuable to Blue Jack than all the keener-witted outlaws attached to the service of the Devil Chief.

Burk had listened to the whole conversation between Governor Kent and Isabel Holley, and every word they had spoken concerning Edmund Holley had filtered through Burk's mind as water runs through a sieve. It was to him mere talk, and he attached no meaning to it. No suspicion that Edmund Holley, the son-in-law of Governor Kent, and the father of the elegant and affected Miss Holley, was one and the same with Blue Jack the outlaw, and the Devil Chief of the Sioux, crossed his mind.

Indeed he had attached no importance to the conversation, and taken no interest in it, until he had heard the name of Gabrielle. Then he had listened with keener hearing, eager and intent.

But even now, so sluggish and dull were his wits, that he had not put the various facts he had heard together. He had no thought that Miss Holley might be more to Blue Jack than a beautiful prisoner, to be held for ransom. He did not even think that there was a possibility that Blue Jack might prove more than a stranger to Governor Kent.

All he thought was that the distinguished statesman was very probably Gay Heber's grandfather. Blue Jack hated Gay Heber; doubtless, as he knew her history, he also hated her grandfather. He, Burk, would therefore win the signal favor of his chief if he brought to him an obnoxious enemy, whom Blue Jack could dispose of to suit his own tastes.

With this limited area of thought in the premises, and with no suspicion of the vast issues that might be involved in his night's work, Burk journeyed complacently onward toward the north.

Governor Kent made an effort to procure the release of Miss Holley and himself, but Burk was deaf to threats and bribes. The gentleman at length desisted, becoming assured that he might as well appeal to stone as to the outlaw.

Miss Holley wept and moaned unceasingly. She implored Burk to release her. She exclaimed in horror and terror of Blue Jack. But Burk was inexorable.

"You shall find out what it is to carry off a great heiress!" cried Isabel Holley. "My father is immensely rich, and has great influence. He will have out troops in search of me. He will kill you and Blue Jack and your nasty Indians."

"Wall," said Burk, "let him come. I won't begin to sing my death yawp till I see him."

"Oh, I wish I had stayed at Omaha till papa could come for me!" wept Miss Holley. "I should never have thought of coming on to him, without his knowledge, if Jenny Leffler hadn't begged and urged me to make the journey with her. And I thought papa might be sick. And I wanted to see his splendid home. And it was vacation, and all the girls were gone, and so—and so— O dear! What will father say when he hears what has happened to me?"

"My dear Miss Holley," said the Governor, in a tone of distress, "this is no time to consider whether you did right or wrong in coming on from school to join your father without his knowledge. You have done so, and the fact cannot now be changed. You are in the midst of perils, but be brave—be calm. Look the worst in the face. Show that a woman can be heroic. Tears and moans will only weaken you, and do no good. Let us trust in God, my dear child. He is able to save us. And let us not cease to cherish hope. The soldiers at Fort Kearney will come after us and release us, I think it probable. And your father, when he hears the news, will hasten to pursue us with troops. Be brave and hopeful then. Let us not make our captivity worse than necessary."

But it was not in the nature of Isabel Holley to be brave. She was a coward by nature, small and weak of soul. She was her father's idol, and had been indulged from her childhood upward. That she should be compelled to know weariness; that she should obey her ruffianly captor; that she should be bound hand and foot; that she would be dragged before the terrible Devil Chief, whose fame had penetrated even to her school at Omaha, seemed to her incredible. She was Sybaritic in temperament, idle, indolent, and luxurious, with a supreme selfishness, and even now she never bestowed one thought upon the grey-haired statesman sharing her suffering and captivity.

"My arms are tied too tight," she sobbed presently. "I can't wipe my face, and it 's all wet. My ankles hurt me. Oh, Mr. Burk, untie me. I won't try to get away. Only untie me!"

"You had better shut your gab, Miss," said Burk, not over-gallantly. "You 're a whining like a sick cat. I never saw a woman make the fuss you do. Mostly they stand it as well as the men."

"But I 'm not used to it," wept Miss Holley. "I am no rough border girl. I 'm a rich young lady, the daughter of the rich Mr. Edmund Holley of Denver. And, oh, I wish I'd stayed at Omaha. My teacher didn't want me to come, but I would do it. O dear! O dear! I shall die on the way, I know I shall! I'm all shaken up now. Mr. Burk, I want to rest. You must stop here—you must. I'm almost dead!"

But Burk only jogged the faster.

He had been charmed with Miss Holley's black eyes with their metallic lustre, with her red cheeks and lips, and her black hair, and had thought her extraordinarily handsome. But he was beginning to be disgusted with her now. Like men of his rude manner of life, he estimated very highly the qualities of coolness and courage, and he shrank in dislike from a coward, even if the coward were a woman.

They rode on for some hours, the Governor silent and thoughtful. Miss Holley gave herself brief intervals of rest, but broke out continually into fresh tears and complaints.

At daybreak Burk ordered a halt. The horses were picketed by the side of a stream, a branch of the Platte, and here they grazed and watered and rested. Burk did not loosen the bonds of his captives, but he offered them food from his saddle-bags, which they declined.

After an hour's rest upon the flower-sprinkled grass, the horses were brought up, the prisoners were put into their saddles, and Burk again mounted and continued his journey northward.

Governor Kent tried to enter into conversation with Burk, but the outlaw did not choose to talk. He was wary and watchful, looking frequently backward through a spy-glass, yet pressing onward with zeal.

At noon they halted again for an hour, but at the expiration of that period of time they took again to the saddle, resuming their course.

The day was bright and pleasant, but to Governor Kent it was insupportably terrible. He had his own anxieties, and he trembled for the future of his fellow-captive. The girl was handsome and young. What was likely to be her fate? Her plaints rung in his ears, as she sobbed and moaned and threatened by turns, and not all his counsels could calm her, or reconcile her to her hardships. He even tried to buy her freedom of Burk, offering a check upon a Denver bank, but the desperado grimly shook his head and ordered him to say no more upon the subject.

A little after sunset, Burk again halted, after a keen survey of the plains through his glass. He bivouacked by the side of a running creek, lifted his prisoners to the ground, and picketed his horses. He made no fire, but brought out cold food from his saddle-bags, offering a portion to his captives. They accepted it, and he fed them, not daring to allow them the use of their hands.

Then he ate his own supper, and strode to and fro in the twilight and the moonlight that soon followed, his bearing anxious and vigilant, his eyes continually sweeping the prairies with their anxious glance.

Miss Holley cried and moaned until she was exhausted, and then lapsed into uneasy slumbers.

The Governor lay broad awake, watchful and anxious.

About ten o'clock in the evening, Burk saw to the southward a moving shadow as of advancing horsemen. The shadow became more and more distinct, and he soon made it out to be a party of Indians, four or five in number. They belonged, he soon discovered, to the band which had attacked the train upon the previous night, and Red Adder was among them.

The party came up, and Burk recognized and welcomed them in relief and delight. They were all in high good-humor.

"Where are the rest?" demanded Burk. "What luck did you have?"

"Good luck," said Red Adder. "We drove off the stock of the emigrants. The braves are following with them. We plundered the wagons. The white men fought bravely, but our surprise had been too much for them. We wounded several. Don't know as any were killed, but we lost three warriors. We have their horses loaded with plunder."

Burk shared the good-humor of the savages.

"You've done well," he said. "The Devil Chief will be proud of you."

"Who are your prisoners?" asked Red Adder.

"Some persons I am taking to the Devil Chief," answered Burk. "The man," and he lowered his voice, "is the great chief's enemy. The girl has a rich father who can pay much ransom."

Red Adder grunted approval.

The Indians had brought with them some fresh meat. They had killed an antelope during the day, and they now lighted a great fire and cooked it, amid loud expressions of rejoicing.

Miss Holley was awakened by the noise, and her alarm was excessive. She wailed and shrieked, and Red Adder sprang toward her with his hatchet, with the evident design of cutting short her lamentations; but Burk interfered, and gruffly told the girl to "shut up if she didn't want to be scalped." The young lady subsided into stifled moans and tears.

Burk proffered some of the hot meat to the prisoners, whose arms were now released. Both ate hungrily. After the supper, guards were appointed for the night, and the Indians lay down and slept.

At day dawn, upon the following morning, the fire was rekindled, and breakfast was prepared. Both prisoners shared it. After the meal, the Governor and Miss Holley were secured to their horses with every precaution, and the Indians, with their captives in their midst, and with Burk at their head, set out upon their long journey homeward.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A WHISPER FULL OF PROMISE.

In the mean time, how fared it with Gay Heber, whom we left a prisoner in one of the Sioux villages, chained at night to a heavy stake in the lodge of Blue Jack, otherwise the Devil Chief, and his Indian wife Neonta?

Terrible as were her perils, and gloomy as were her prospects, threatened by her enemy with her speedy marriage to Lenno the Indian dandy—she who had believed herself too young even to think of marriage with any one—it was not to be wondered at that Gay's spirit sank under a wave of despair, and that for a brief space she longed to die.

But, as we have intimated, her despair was brief. Her nature was essentially buoyant and hopeful. She trusted in God's mercy and goodness with the unquestioning faith of a little child. She trusted in Mark Heber also, and knew that he would come for her as soon as he could. She hoped that he would come in time to save her.

And so, when her Indian suitor had gone forth from the lodge of his chief, and Blue Jack flung himself upon his skin-draped couch and talked in a low voice in the Dacota tongue to his Indian wife, and the fire burned low on the stone hearth, filling the wigwam with dusky lights among shadows, Gay Heber dragged nearer to her a gay red blanket which lay on the floor, and wrapping herself in it, she lay down, said her prayers in a whisper, and went to sleep.

Blue Jack approached and bent over her, an hour later. The red glow of the dying embers fell full upon her childish face. She was pale and thin, but her youthful beauty was undimmed. Even in sleep, the arch piquancy of her bright young face was apparent. Her short dusk tresses curled in little rings about her small head. Her long lashes lay curling on her cheeks. She was, even in repose and in fatigue, the incarnation of youth and brightness and beauty.

But into the eyes of the Devil Chief, as he looked upon her, crept an expression of fear and hatred.

"Why didn't she die years ago, with her mother?" he whispered. "I shall know no peace nor safety while she lives. I have passed my word to Lenno that she shall be his wife, and the drudgery of an Indian wigwam will probably soon break her down; but yet there is the terrible possibility that she may survive the hardships and toils, and live here for years—to appear at last and ruin me. I feel, somehow, a presentiment that she will be my ruin. She has an indomitable courage and will. Perhaps, after all, it would be safer to put her out of the way. If she were really dead, I should come into my wife's handsome fortune."

He meditated darkly, and Neonta, watching him slily, read his hatred of the girl whom he had claimed as his daughter.

The Devil Chief turned presently to his Indian wife, and said to her, in a hissing voice:

"Neonta, you had better put the girl to drudgery. I cannot kill her in cold blood, but I desire her death. She is in my way. While she lives there is always danger for me."

"Then she shall die," said Neonta calmly. "Leave the pale-faced girl to Neonta. Let the Devil Chief trust Neonta, and all will go well."

Nothing more was said between them that night upon the subject of the girl captive, but the pair understood each other, and Blue Jack felt a load of apprehension fall from his burdened soul. He could not murder Gay Heber in cold blood, for she looked at him with eyes like those he had once known and loved; but he could stand by and see her die at the hands of another, and that was what he intended to do.

The next morning Gay was awakened by the noise of the other occupants of the lodge. She half arose, and looked around her.

Blue Jack was gone out of doors. His retreating steps had aroused the captive. Neonta was cooking a breakfast of broiled birds, and a kettle of steaming coffee hung over the fire. The pleasant beverage found upon most breakfast tables throughout the region of civilization was especially liked by the Devil Chief, who had taught his Indian wife to prepare it after a recipe of his own. A corn-cake was wrapped in leaves, and was baking in the hot ashes.

Gay sat up and smoothed her short locks with her hands. Blue Jack returned by the time breakfast was ready, and Neonta waited upon him as a subject waits upon a king. When he had finished, she ate her breakfast by the hearth. It was only on special occasions that Neonta overlooked the customs of her people, and acceded to her white husband's wish, sharing his meal with him.

When she also had finished, she filled a cup with coffee, strong to bitterness, sweetened it, and gave it to Gay. She gave her also half a broiled bird and some corn-cake in a wooden dish. Gay was hungry, and devoured all that was given to her.

"Your troubles don't seem to take away your appetite," remarked Blue Jack, with a sneer.

"Why should they?" asked Gay. "They will last only a short time, you know."

"That 's true," said the outlaw darkly and significantly. "They will last only a short time."

Something in his tone or manner sent a sudden chill to Gay's heart. She overcame it, with effort, but the remembrance lingered with her. The possibility that he had changed his mind about her marriage with Lenno, and meant to kill her instead, dawned upon her.

"I wish the girl was dead, and out of my way," said Blue Jack, in the Dacota language, to his Indian wife, gloomily. "I want to go to Denver. I was due there in June. I have wasted the whole summer on this girl, and have but just captured her."

"Why do you wish to go to Denver?" demanded Neonta, with a jealous flash of her eyes. "You go to Denver much. Perhaps the Devil Chief goes to see white woman? Ha?"

"No, I don't," was the response. "I go on business. I have letters there from the East waiting for me. Some of them demand answers. I want my letters, Neonta, and I can't tell what may happen if I do not get them. I wish the girl here was dead."

"Let the Devil Chief be patient," said the Indian wife. "Neonta could kill the white captive with one stroke of the knife—"

"No, no. I don't want to know anything about it," interposed Blue Jack. "Let her live on a week or so. Perhaps she'll die of herself. She looks so like her mother," he added softly, as if speaking to himself. "I cannot bear to kill her. Perhaps it would be safe to marry her to Lenno. Put her through the drudgery, and I 'll think the matter over."

He hurried out of the lodge, going into that of his father-in-law, the Indian chief Yako.

Neonta came forward and loosened Gay's bonds, and the girl stood up, stiff in her limbs, and aching in every bone, with a look of wonder and surprise on her young face.

"Why do you release me?" she asked.

"No talk," said Neonta, frowning. "Girl slave. Girl work. Neonta not work now. Girl go for water."

She pointed at a heavy wooden bucket that stood empty on the floor near the fire. Gay seized it, and inquired:

"Where shall I go for water?"

Neonta stepped to the door and called to her a lithe young Indian lad, some eight years old. She gave him some injunctions in his native tongue, and then said to Gay:

"Girl go. Boy show the way."

Gay Heber hurried out of the lodge with a glad, light step. A breath of fresh air, after the close atmosphere of the wigwam, was delightful to her. The sense of motion, unfettered by thongs or bonds, was deliciously grateful to her. Her soul arose within her in a song of praise as she entered into the sunshine.

The boy led her past the lodge of Yako, and down a narrow pathway threading between the huts nearly to the outskirts of the village. All the juvenile population followed the girl, shouting and screaming, and with them went vast numbers of dogs, leaping and barking.

The Indian lad halted beside a natural spring, and pointed to it. Gay filled her bucket leisurely, looking around her keenly.

Three or four Indian huts lay beyond the spring, like outposts or sentinel wigwams.

The spring was in the shadow of a clump of tall thickly growing oak-trees, whose interlacing branches made a very bower of shade. Behind the spring was a mass of jagged stones, looking as if they had thus lain in chaotic confusion since some long-ago upheaval of the rock.

Gay surveyed the village closely, and looked beyond toward the free, wild plains over which she believed with steadfast faith that Mark Heber was hastening to her. Then she sighed, and took up her brimming bucket and returned to the lodge.

This was the beginning of her servitude.

She was required to cook the dinner of roasted game, succotash, coffee and corn bread, and to wait upon the Devil Chief and his Indian wife like a servant. She made no complaints, serving them patiently and cheerfully. She made two further trips that day to the spring, accompanied by the Indian lad, who was no longer her guide but her guard, set to watch against any attempt on her part to escape.

In the afternoon Neonta taught her to embroider moccasins of deer-skin with beads and the colored quills of birds and of the hedgehog, and kept her hard at work until time to prepare the evening meal, which was now become Gay's appointed task.

After supper, Lenno came in and "courted" the girl captive in Indian style, bringing her flowers and beads and some gay feathers. He had stiffened his long straight locks with rank bear's grease, and they shone in the firelight. The big gold hoops in his ears had been freshly scoured. His leggings and tunic were handsomely embroidered and fringed. He wore his scarlet blanket with the airs of a would-be lady of fashion displaying an Indian cashmere shawl. The choicest of feathers waved above his low and narrow forehead. Evidently he thought himself a gem of the first water, and his sinister, cruel face actually wore a smirk and smile that looked oddly on his Indian features.

Gay smiled involuntarily at his airs and graces, and at the dandyism of his appearance. He interpreted the smile as an encouragement to his suit. He addressed her in limited English, assuring her that the soul of Lenno, like the birds in spring-time, called for a mate, and that the Great Spirit had sent her to him to preside over his wigwam, to cook his game, to till his fields, and to be his bride.

Then he exalted himself to the extent of his knowledge of English. He told her that the Poncas and the Arrapahoes, and the Assiniboins, and the Indians of every nation, trembled and hid their faces in affright when they heard the name of Lenno. He told her that he was a great warrior, and that the mothers of other tribes frightened their children into good behavior by simply uttering the name of Lenno. He chanted his own praises an hour or more, and Gay listened because she could not well do otherwise.

Feeling convinced that he had made a good impression upon her, and satisfied with his night's work, Lenno took his leave at last, and Neonta bound the captive securely to her stake, and Gay couched down in her blanket and went to sleep.

The next day, the next, and the next, were like the first. The same weary round of drudgery and toil; the same visits to the spring, attended and guarded by the Indian lad; the same lessons in embroidery, at which Gay was growing expert, and the same "courting" in the evening from the Indian dandy Lenno.

Blue Jack grew anxious to be on the way to Denver. He knew that letters awaited him there, and he wanted them. He longed to hear from his daughter, whom he believed to be at her school in Omaha where he had placed her, and he began to meditate a flying visit to that flourishing town at an early day. But he felt he could not go with Gay's fate undecided. He must dispose of her, or his trip would be tormented with fears that she would escape from her prison, or be rescued. He grew sullen and morose, and meditated night and day upon her murder.

Upon the evening of the fourth day, as the shadows of the starless night were deepening over the Indian village, Blue Jack reclined on his skin-draped couch in his fire-lit wigwam, and smoked a pipe, thinking upon the one subject that filled his mind night and day.

"Neonta," he said abruptly, with a glance around the lodge interior, "where is the girl?"

"I sent her this moment to the spring for water, with the lad to watch her," said Neonta, in her own language. "Does the Devil Chief want her?"

"No; but I've made up my mind at last," said Blue Jack grimly. "The girl must die. She cannot marry Lenno. She is in my way. I have said it—she must die!"

"The Devil Chief speaks well," said Neonta, who had no love for her young lodger. "The pale-faced girl shall die. When does the Devil Chief desire to send her to the land of the spirits?"

"To-night!" said Blue Jack recklessly. "I can stand it no longer. Let her die to-night. Give her some drink, Neonta, that shall kill her easily. As for me, there is a council to-night in Yako's lodge, and I must be there. They are waiting for me now. Don't neglect this thing, Neonta. The girl must die to-night!"

He strode with morose face from his wigwam, and went into the lodge of his Indian father-in-law.

Neonta took down from a crevice in the wall a bunch of dried herbs and put them into an iron dish with water, and set them over the fire, muttering:

"The Devil Chief has well said. When the girl comes in, she shall drink and die!"

Meanwhile, unconscious of the doom that had been settled for her, Gay Heber went to the spring, guarded by the little Indian lad who always attended her when she was out of doors. He was sharp of eye, and a cry from him would arouse the village, so Gay never made any attempt at escape. Usually too she was accompanied by other children and by dogs, but to-night she had with her only the one lad.

She bent over the spring to fill her bucket of water. All around lay the thick shadows of the early evening. There was neither moon nor stars, and rain was in the heavy air. Gay sighed as she lifted the cumbrous bucket, and stood with it hanging heavily at her side.

Some Indian children several rods distant had heaped dry leaves and twigs and sticks in the form of a cone, and at this moment set fire to it. The flames rose redly, and the children danced around it with shouts and cries.

The Indian lad attending Gay moved away a few yards, his eyes fixed upon his young companions, whose sports he longed with all his boyish soul to share.

But Gay took no advantage of his momentary abstraction. She knew that if she made a movement toward flight, the boy would hear her and arouse the village. No, she could not escape unaided, and a terrible dread brooded heavily in her heart that some harm had happened to Mark. Perhaps, she thought with a shudder, he had encountered the party of twenty warriors under Red Adder and Burk, and had been killed.

This thought came to her as she stood there in the dusky shadow, and the tears flooded her brown eyes, and a choking sob escaped her.

Just then, from the branches of the trees above her, or from the rocks beyond the spring—she could not tell which—came the soft, melancholy notes of a whippowil.

Gay started. She had practised those notes with Mark in their prairie home many a time, in the pleasant home evenings. A sudden hope thrilled her. With her eyes fixed upon the wrapt Indian lad, she softly breathed the answering notes.

The boy did not turn. He had taken Gay's utterance for the utterance of the bird whose notes she had counterfeited.

Gay stood breathless—expectant.

And then through the darkness, covered by the shouts of the Indian children around their fire, and unheard even by the Indian lad, a soft low whisper thrilled the air—a whisper which shaped the words:

"Hush! Is it you, Gay? I can just make out your face and form against the light of yonder fire."

The voice was that of Mark Heber.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

"BE SURE YOU 'RE RIGHT, THEN GO AHEAD."

Not long since we were much amused (and perhaps slightly disgusted) in hearing a wordy politician, in a public speech, attempt to explain something which never had an existence, and which was never likely to exist. It reminded us of a story we once heard of Charles the Second, of England. When Charles chartered the Royal Society he was minded to give the philosophers a royal lesson, and he propounded to them the following:—

"Why is it, my lords and gentlemen, that if you fill a vessel with water to the very brim, so that it will hold not a drop more, yet, putting a turbot therein it shall not overflow the vessel?"

Many were the sage conjectures,—the fish would absorb as much water as compensated for his own bulk,—that he condensed the water to that amount,—that the air-bladder had something to do with the phenomenon,—and many other reasons, which were propounded and abandoned in turn, much to the entertainment of the merry monarch.

At length Mr. Wren (afterward Sir Christopher) modestly asked,—

"But is your Majesty sure that such would be the case?"

"Aye, there you have it," exclaimed the King, laughing. "Always, gentlemen, find out whether a thing be true before you attempt to account for it, and then I shall not be ashamed of the charter I have given you." S. C., JR.

—It is the nature of man to be displeased with everything that disappoints a favorite hope or flattering project; and it is the folly of too many of them, to condemn without investigating circumstances.

THE FATAL PROMISE.

BY KATE KENNEDY.

Women's friendships have often been derided, but sometimes they are only *too* faithful.

Such was the bond that united the Lady Isabel Lennox to Mrs. Forbes, the wife of the young Laird of Achinroch. Lady Isabel was an Earl's only child and heiress, though her father's title would pass to a distant cousin, and cousins in Scotland count relationship beyond the twentieth, and even fortieth degree. She was married early to one of her father's neighbors, a young man of good family and still goodlier acres, who, though a sportsman pure and simple, yet avoided the degrading excesses that in days of old marked the career of Scotch, and other, country gentlemen.

Mrs. Forbes, the daughter of an old house and of undoubtedly loyal ancestry, was also a near neighbor of Lady Isabel, and married about the same time as her friend; but less fortunate in her after lot, found in her husband only a coarse and ill-mannered lout, addicted to all the vices of the common run of lairds, and a representative of but very few of their virtues. This circumstance drew the bond of friendship still closer between the two young wives, and Jessie Forbes consoled herself for her own forlorn situation by passing many months of the year in her friend's society.

Lady Isabel was the happy mother of several fine and healthy, if not intellectual children; and Mrs. Forbes had one only boy, whom she jealously guarded from her husband's influence, and tried as much as she could to throw into the company of the Lennox children of his own age.

Some years after her marriage Lady Isabel received a terrible shock, which almost threatened to affect her mind. Her mother had been thrown from her carriage over a precipice in the mountains near her home, and was carried to Lady Isabel's house bleeding and insensible. She never recovered consciousness, though her daughter, with whom she had recently had some slight misunderstanding, adjured her by all that was holy to speak to her, and even caused the doctor to administer restoratives which were dangerous, from their exceeding strength and the weakness of the sufferer to whom they were applied. Lady Isabel, frantic with grief, writhed by her mother's couch, calling upon her in vain, violently chafing her hands, and otherwise showing by her distracted demeanor how vehement was her desire to speak with her mother and obtain her forgiveness before she died. All was of no avail, and the unconscious woman passed away almost without a sign that might apparently divide unconsciousness from death. Isabel was dragged by force from the bedside, but calm could not be restored to her. Her father, who had been present from the beginning, seemed to have lost all influence over her, and her husband and children were entirely powerless to divert her thoughts for one instant. Mrs. Forbes was summoned, but the unhappy daughter raved and wept, called herself accursed, a matricide, and declared that death alone could make her happy, by transferring her to a sphere where she could speak to her mother and obtain her forgiveness. All soothing remedies, moral and physical, were of no avail; even the clergyman could do nothing to calm the excited woman.

One day not long after her mother's death, Isabel Lennox herself fell into a state of utter unconsciousness, and seemed about to follow the parent she so wildly mourned. The physicians, who had already been in attendance, watched her anxiously; Mrs. Forbes never left the bedside. Mr. Lennox was moody and abstracted, neglected his guns and hounds, and lounged uneasily about the rooms adjoining his wife's. His genuine sorrow was very touching, and the whole household seemed to be in mourning. The doctors looked grave—perhaps I should say puzzled—at this protracted swoon, from which nothing could rouse the pale and motionless form. At last, when it had continued for three days, one of them ventured to pronounce the young wife dead, and her husband and friend could not gainsay the suggestion. Still the thing seemed miraculous and awful to them. Isabel had *suddenly* become unconscious and rigid, and since that no sign of pain and no trace of decomposition had appeared. There had been nothing to mark the moment of death, and now there was nothing to prove that death had indeed taken place. Yet who had ever heard of a three days' swoon? Some of the old retainers whispered the word "witchcraft," with bated breath and frightened looks, but the doctors indignantly glanced at each other and swore that Lady Isabel Lennox was a corpse, and had died naturally of an internal disease.

A great many things were unknown to the country doctors of remote Scotch localities two or three generations ago, as they are even now, to a great many practitioners in far-off corners of the globe. So at last the orders were given for the funeral, and a few women were left with the corpse to lay it out.

The poor husband was in the next room, and one or two of the children were playing at the foot of the huge old-fashioned sofa whereon he was half-stretched. Suddenly a suppressed noise was heard from the death-chamber, and then a scream, and a sound as of several women rushing to the door. The young man looked up, but the noise having ceased, he fell again into his uneasy musing. There was another door to the room next him, and it was through that the affrighted women had fled.

Shaking with terror, they recounted to their fellow-servants how "my leddy" had opened her eyes as they were handling her, and said something—*what* they could not tell—and turned round with a sigh that sent the blood running cold through their veins. They had made for the door, and rushed down the passage and stairs, afraid of looking behind them. But now should not some one go and tell the master what had happened? No one, however, seemed willing to bear such "uncanny" tidings.

In the mean while, the door between the bedroom and dressing-room was slowly opened, and young Lennox, his eyes starting out of his head, saw the white-clad figure of his wife enter gently, and stand gazing at him. A stony stare of horror was all his answer; but when the figure spoke, he fairly sprang from the sofa, and seizing the affrighted children, tried to reach the second door of the apartment, leading into a sitting-room beyond. His wife again spoke, in bewildered accents:

"Lennox! what is it? What has happened?"

He turned back his head, pushing the children before him into the outer room, and stood irresolute on the threshold. Now he came to think of it, the voice was very natural.

"Isabel! are you alive?" were his first words.

"Alive!" she said, in astonishment. "Are you joking?"

"God forgive me! joking, no! But I thought you were dead."

His wife smiled strangely. He seemed hardly recovered yet. A noise in the outer room was heard, and the old father, with two or three frightened looking women, came in. At sight of their mistress, the latter fled. The man stood silent and transfixed. Soon, however, the supposed corpse made them believe in her real and living identity, and the doctors were again sent for. It was ascertained that a cataleptic fit had ensued on the great agony of mind sustained by Lady Isabel at the death of her mother. Her health and strength gradually returned, and her life went on much the same as before, except that from time to time the same kind of fit recurred, and during the intervals, Lady Isabel's mind was a prey to great melancholy and gloom.

Mrs. Forbes alone seemed to exercise a cheering effect on her friend, but the state of mind into which the unfortunate woman had fallen may be conceived by the following conversation.

The two were seated in the morning room of Lennox Castle, while the children were playing noisily in a deserted hall above.

"Jessie," said Lady Isabel, "did you believe I was dead that time when I first had a fit?"

"I did, dear, after a time. I never heard of those fits before, and I could not understand it."

"Do you think I shall ever forget that, Jessie, when my own husband drew away from me, and my children looked scared, as if they had seen a ghost?"

"You must not let your mind dwell on it, Izzy."

"It was a punishment for my disagreement with my poor mother; I am a doomed woman now, so that even my own shrink from me. I would rather die now than live on under this awful ban."

Mrs. Forbes tried to dispel the gloom of Isabel's tortured mind, but even she could hardly succeed this time, and both worked at their embroidery in silence till her friend said abruptly:

"Jessie, do you know I would rather be you with your wicked husband, than myself with all the love of Lennox and my father and children, and this horror of horrors forever standing between me and happiness. I feel as if the cold of the grave were always about me. I feel, whenever a draught blows on me, as if it was the rush of air from a charnel-house. I cannot bear to go to church even, for our pew is directly over the vault. And when I wake up in the night I fancy I am in a coffin, and my mother is kneeling on it to keep it down. Oh! I am miserable, night and day, and I dare not tell Lennox."

"You should not tell yourself, dear," answered Mrs. Forbes soothingly. "And now let us talk of something else."

But her friend would not. She grew graver, and said:

"Now, Jessie, if you love me, and you always told me you did, you will promise me something I am going to ask."

"Yes," said Jessie gayly.

"You have promised now, mind."

"Oh! but if it is anything horrid—"

"Hush!" interrupted Isabel. "It is only to prevent something horrid. Now, wherever you may be, promise me that if you hear of my death, you will come to me and see my body before they put me in the coffin. Then you will pierce my heart with a golden bodkin, to make sure that I shall not be buried alive."

"This is too horrible to think of, Isabel. You don't mean it."

"I do, solemnly. I ask it of you because you are my greatest friend; but if you will not promise to do it, aye, and swear it on the Bible too, I shall bribe some one to do me this service, and make it well worth her while to obey me. Will you do it for me?"

Mrs. Forbes hesitated; but at last, remembering that if this awful mission were even hinted to an unscrupulous menial, it might be the means of a terrible crime being committed and going forever unpunished, she consented to take the oath upon the Bible.

"Now I am quite content," said Lady Isabel, more cheerfully. "If I should be alive, the pain will be nothing compared to the agony of waking up, a living prisoner, within a leaden coffin. But most likely they will never attempt to bury me until so long after my supposed death that it will be almost impossible to be deceived; still I feel all the happier for knowing that the worst is provided for. Thanks, my friend, for setting my poor mind at ease upon that score."

The terrible pact remained a secret between the friends. Lady Isabel gave Mrs. Forbes a long, tapering golden bodkin, with a point so sharp that one stab with it could not fail to produce instant death. The unsuspecting husband continued to cheer his wife up as well as he could, and the children grew in strength and rustic beauty, hardy plants of the mountains and forests.

A few years passed, and Mrs. Forbes of Achinroch became a widow, and went to England for a short stay with some relatives of her mother. England was a long journey then from the remote part of Scotland where Lady Isabel lived, but the two friends corresponded as often as the uncertain posts allowed. After a while Mrs. Forbes received no answer to several letters, and fearing something was wrong, became very uneasy about the inhabitants of Lennox Castle.

The silence continued, and remembering the contingency her friend had so much feared, Mrs. Forbes started on her homeward way. Before going to Achinroch, which was some ten miles distant from Lennox Castle, she stopped her carriage at the latter place, and hastily inquired whether all were well. The answer was that Lady Isabel was dead, and that the funeral was fixed for the morrow.

Shocked beyond utterance, the young widow asked to see Mr. Lennox. He was in the library, arranging some of the last details with the steward. The funeral of Lady Isabel was to be a most magnificent affair. All the retainers of her father's family, as well as those of the clan Lennox, were to follow the coffin with torches inverted, as the funeral was to take place at night, according to a fancy once expressed by the deceased.

Lennox rose as his wife's friend, all travel-stained as she was, came hurriedly into the room. She asked the details of this last and more serious fit, and before long was satisfied that this time there was no doubt of the real death of her poor friend. "Still," she said to herself, "I feel bound by that oath she so solemnly administered to me, to execute her last commands."

Jessie Forbes had the national superstition strongly developed, and owned to a lurking fear that if she neglected the behest of the deceased, the unrestful ghost of her friend would pursue her for ever after, reproaching her for her broken trust.

So, though reluctant and even frightened, she requested the widower to allow her to spend an hour with the corpse, alone and undisturbed. The request, strange as it seemed, was of course granted without delay. The bereaved husband led her into the same large chamber where the first symptom of these fatal visitations had occurred. The room was unchanged, but the curtains were closely drawn, and everything was in that melancholy and stiff order that denotes the want of a living spirit to give animation to the trifling surroundings of a boudoir. The door of the dressing-room was open. Large jars of dried rose and lavender leaves were set in the corners of the room, and near the head of the bed were two tall lighted candles. The coffin, with its beautiful trappings of velvet and its smooth satin lining, lay on trestles in the dressing-room. Mr. Lennox had wished to delay as long as possible the last soldering of the lead over the head of his wife. The snowy pillows of the bed were covered with lace, and a large satin counterpane, thickly embroidered, an old family relic, lay over the rigid and still beautiful form of Isabel Lennox. The bed was high and old-fashioned, and there were steps near it.

Once alone with the dead, Mrs. Forbes gazed into the still face; the fixed look was unmistakable, the forehead was cold. She breathed a sigh of relief. It was awful to think, however, of the promise that weighed on her mind like an incubus. Yet her trust must be fulfilled. She stood on the steps and bent over, kissing the corpse. The trance had lasted five days and a half now, if trance it were, but that she would not believe. So, tremblingly, and not till she had been for some time in the silent room, she unsheathed the golden bodkin from its slight covering, and turning down the coverlet, felt for her friend's cold heart. The tall candles flickered, and a cold breath seemed to stir the heavy bed curtains. It was only the door of the dressing-room swinging a little in the draft that came from the open window beyond. She took courage and lifted the weapon. Slowly she brought it down, and then plunged it sharply into the left side of the corpse.

A trembling that was not that of her own hand, startled her, and in a second a groan and a convulsion told her what she had done. The corpse turned over on its side.

* * * * *

Hours afterward the attendants entered the room.

The bed was tossed, the corpse half uncovered, and a little congealed blood appeared on the sheets.

On the floor beside the bed lay Mrs. Forbes, in a dead swoon.

It was a scene of awful gloom: the desecrated bed of death, the ghastly trace of dull red blood, the bodkin still partly embedded in the body.

Mr. Lennox gave strict orders that nothing of the fatal mystery should be divulged, and when Mrs. Forbes was sufficiently recovered, he and she conferred long together on the terrible occurrence. He subsequently found, among his wife's papers, an account of the promise exacted years before from her friend; this relation being signed and attested, and then sealed, with this superscription:

"For my husband: to be opened after my funeral."

If anything could console the unfortunate woman who, still more than Lady Isabel, may be called the victim of the fatal promise, it was the opening of this paper. Very little of the real story was publicly known, but all the people at Achinroch can tell you to this day that Mrs. Forbes never left off wearing mourning, and passed her life in the strictest retirement, devoting herself entirely to the care and instruction of the poor.

A HOMEOPATHIC CURE.

BY SYLVANUS COBB, JR.

Mr. Burgundy Muddle was a wonder,—that is, taking him at his own estimate. He had lived five and fifty years, and in business he had been very fortunate. In youth he had been poor, and now he was rich; and, like many other men who have come up from small beginnings, dependent alone upon their own industry and perseverance, he was generous and sympathetic; but, unlike many others of the same self-sustaining class, as he grew older he grew less provident; and, even after he had reached the age of fifty, he began to contract bad habits—bad habits that were very expensive.

Burgundy Muddle had had two children live to grow up—both daughters,—and these daughters he had married off, and to each he had given a fortune.

Mr. Burgundy Muddle was exactly that sort of a man made to enjoy life. At least, so he himself declared. He was short, and fat—very fat,—and when he laughed his rotundity of adipose tissue shook like a jelly bag. His eyes twinkled merrily, and his red face was jolly.

And Mrs. Burgundy Muddle was a fit companion for Mr. Burgundy. She, too, was round and plump, with a happy, laughing face, and her heart was the very quintessence of goodness and charity. And Mr. Burgundy owed much of his success in life to this genial, good-natured wife,—owed more, perhaps, than he was aware of; for she had made no parade of her helping work, moving on so smoothly and so tranquilly that the beneficent results followed as the bloom and verdure follow the dew and the sunshine.

Burgundy Muddle felt his home grow lonesome after his daughters were gone, and he brought other companionship to his house. He had always possessed a convivial proclivity; and now, in his eager desire for social enjoyment, he suffered the convivial idea to predominate.

A few years previous a travelling lecturer—a certain Elegantissimus Philosophorum, M. D., A. S. S., etc., etc.,—whose specialties of science had comprehended everything that had to do with Human Life, had visited our town, and had called Burgundy Muddle upon the platform at one of his public lectures. He wanted Mr. Muddle for a "subject," and Mr. Muddle, having at the time a goodly quantity of spirituous beverage inside his skin, went up readily enough. And on that occasion Elegantissimus Philosophorum expounded wonderfully; and in conclusion he had said to the rotund, ruddy-faced subject,—

"My dear sir, you are a perfect marvel. Your constitution is a human miracle. You are good for a hundred years of life. And you were made to enjoy life. No surfeit will ever kill *you*. Mercy! I wish I possessed a tenth part of your vitality!"

On the following day the Philosopher borrowed ten dollars of Mr. Muddle, which sum was cheerfully lent.

At the age of fifty-five we find Burgundy Muddle bound to lead a social, jolly life. He owned a spacious mansion, and he had gathered around him a set of genial spirits—spirits willing to sing his praises while they feasted at his board. And he went on from bad to worse. From the very nature of his constitution and temperament the convivial disease grew upon him. It came at length that his riotous companions were at his house four evenings in a week, and at least four times in a week he went to bed in a very uncertain condition. He bought a bronze statue of Bacchus for his dining-room, and upon the walls he hung the most jolly and rollicking pictures he could find. He declared that he didn't feel himself to be more than one-and-twenty. In fact, he was just beginning to enjoy life.

Mrs. Muddle looked on in pain and sorrow. At first she had been willing that her husband should seek a little outside sociality to fill the space made vacant by the departure of his daughters, but she had not anticipated such a whirlpool of dissipation. She saw very plainly that Burgundy was going down. He was on the road to ruin. In her gentle, smiling way, she expostulated with him. She told him he could not long bear up under such a course of excess.

But Burgundy Muddle pooh-pooh'd. What could harm him? Had she forgotten the assertion of the learned and astute Elegantissimus Philosophorum? "Bah!"—and he smote triumphantly upon his swelling bosom,—"I have a vitality in me that can't be killed by any such light and agreeable pastime."

And then Mrs. Muddle gently hinted to him that there was a bottom to his purse, and that he might find it sooner than he thought if he kept on in this way much longer. He was giving, on an average, four convivial parties a week, and his bills were largely on the increase. For the six months last past his expenses had exceeded his income by more than double,—aye, as she plainly demonstrated, the expenses of the last month had been more than four times the amount of his income.

But Mr. Muddle would not listen. He was bound to *live!*

Ah! there was the wife's great fear. As her husband was now going on he could not live much longer; and she would not lose him if she could help it. He was a dear good soul, and she loved him. She must save him if the thing were possible. But if she would do this she must not seem to oppose him. No,—she must humor him; and for a time she gave him to understand that he had overcome her fears.

And Burgundy Muddle went on more uproariously than ever—went so far that he even had a party at his house on Saturday evening, and sat at his board, drinking and carousing, far into the small hours of Sabbath morning.

At length Mrs. Muddle put down her foot. But she did it very quietly, and in the privacy of her own chamber. Then she put on her bonnet and walked out, and on her way she stopped in to see Dr. Clavicle. Dr. Clavicle had been her family physician ever since she could remember. He was an old man, past threescore-and-ten, still hale and hearty, and still in extensive practice. She told him how her husband was going on, and asked him what he thought of it. He could think but one thing. He thought as she had thought—that Burgundy Muddle could not live much longer unless he changed his habits.

"What he takes for fat," said Dr. Clavicle, "is growing to be only bloat. His over-indulgence in spirituous beverages has so weakened the action of the heart that his circulation is impeded. More than half the fluid which he thinks blood is only water; and his increasing obesity is more dropsy than fat. He is surely killing himself."

"Then you must help me to save him."

"But how?"

"I have an idea, Doctor."

And Mrs. Muddle and the Doctor put their heads together and plotted; and the nature of their plot we shall see.

Before Mrs. Muddle left his house Dr. Clavicle carefully compounded a powder, which he made up into several tiny parcels, and having received directions for their use, the lady wended her way homeward

On the following morning Mrs. Muddle surreptitiously introduced the contents of one of the mysterious papers into Burgundy's coffee. Several times during the day Mr. Muddle spoke of a "funny feeling" at his stomach, and he took numerous glasses of wine to overcome it. That evening Mrs. Muddle introduced another powder into his tea. That night Muddle's friends came, and it was long past midnight when he stumbled up to his bed; and he would have retired in his boots and cravat had not his wife helped him to remove them.

On the following morning Muddle was not feeling well at all. He drank several cups of strong hot coffee, and as Mrs. Muddle had prepared the beverage it is to be supposed that she had not forgotten Dr. Clavicle's powders.

After breakfast Muddle walked out; but he soon came back.

"Gussie," said he, sinking into a chair, and pressing both hands over his diaphragm, "I don't feel well."

Mrs. Muddle—her Christian name was Augusta—appeared horror-stricken. She clasped her hands like one terrified.

"O! Burgundy!—What is it? How awfully you do look!"

Muddle, groaning and gasping, said that his stomach was in pain, and that his heart ached.

"O, 'Gundy dear, I hope you an't going to die! Mercy! how bad your face is!"

Burgundy tumbled upon the sofa, and begged his wife to send for Dr. Clavicle; and after this, with Mrs. Muddle's assistance, he managed to get up to his bed.

Dr. Clavicle came, and as he sat by the bedside, and held Muddle's wrist, and looked into Muddle's face, he shook his head with mysterious solemnity.

"Dear Doctor, what is it?" groaned the sufferer.

"—sh!" warned Clavicle. "You must not exert yourself. Speak very softly. Do you feel a pain in the head?"

"Yes."

"Is there a dull throbbing in the temples?"

"Yes."

"Do you experience a nausea at the stomach?"

"O,—yes, yes."

"And now I have one more question:—Is there a stifled, aching sensation at the heart?"

"O! yes, there is! Dear Doctor, what is it? Is it anything dangerous?"

Dr. Clavicle shook his head more solemnly than before.

"I have never met a case like this until now," he said; "and I find only two cases like it on record. One was the case of Noolah-nan-Barboolah, King of Burhampootrah, and the other was of Signor Cavaletti Dandarigo, Duke of Modena. Both men were exceedingly fleshy, and high livers. It is said that Dandarigo had on an average four carousals of dissipation in a week; and if the historian is correct, Noolah-nan-Barboolah scarcely ever went to bed sober."

"Mercy! Doctor,—wh-wh-what is it?"

"You wish to know the truth?"

"Ye— Ye-es."

"Then, Mr. Muddle, I tell you plainly, you have the *pleuratic pericarditic gout*,—a disease of the heart far more terrible than hypertrophy or atrophy, because of its swiftness and painfulness of action. The Signor Cavaletti was stricken down twice. From the first attack his physicians saved him; but he resumed his debauch, and the second attack no human power could overcome."

Mrs. Muddle sat by the bedside weeping hysterically, and poor Burgundy quaked and shook in an agony of terror. He was afraid of death,—and such a death!

"O! Doctor!—for the love of Heaven! can't you save me?" And he caught the old physician's hand, and repeated the petition most piteously.

And still Dr. Clavicle shook his head.

"I don't know," he said. "I might possibly lift you over this attack; but that would not save you. You have no idea of your condition. You have presumed too much upon your strength of constitution. Your heart is using itself up. *There* is the trouble—at the HEART. Were it only a matter of other organs you might worry along, and be years in dying; but when the heart stops, the end has come. Need I tell you what I fear?"

"Tell me."

"You will be offended."

"You—you—fear that I shall go at it again—that I shall drink, and riot, and carouse?"

"Yes."

"Then, Doctor, I swear I won't! If you'll save me from this, I'll never tumble into it again! O! dear Doctor—O! O! O!—my poor heart!"

Dr. Clavicle spoke soothing, hopeful words, and in the end he gave Muddle strong encouragement. He would overcome the present attack if it lay in his power; but he solemnly pledged himself that a second attack would be beyond the reach of human skill. And he dealt out his medicine, and gave Mrs. Muddle directions how to administer it; and to Burgundy he gave strict orders of perfect quiet and abstinence.

Mrs. Muddle had faith in the doctor—had faith that the medicine could do no lasting harm,—and she gave it as directed; and no wife ever attended more faithfully, and patiently, and lovingly upon a sick husband than did she.

Dr. Clavicle kept Burgundy Muddle sick full three weeks, at the end of which time the bloat was all eliminated, and the rotundy of body most wondrously reduced. Then the doctor gave a gentle tonic, stopping all other medicine; and a few days afterward he said to his patient,—

"Now, my dear Muddle, you may enjoy your beef-steak and potatoes—your mutton and your wife's good bread,—and you may enjoy your good pure tea; but you had better give coffee the go-by. At all events, look out for that other—"

"Hush! Hold up, Doctor. No more of that. I don't need to be warned again. You've got my solemn oath, and that's enough."

And in a very few days Mr. Muddle waxed hale and strong again. His old companions sought to come back to him, but he gave them the cut direct. At the end of a month he went into business again, where he found the only entertainment that could afford proper and healthful food for his active mind, and, at the same time, hold his physical life in tune.

We don't know that Mrs. Muddle or the Doctor ever confessed to Burgundy the plot they had executed for his redemption; but we do know that when her husband had been a year upon the new mode of life, his wife said to him, one evening, as they sat together in their comfortable parlor,—

"Gundy dear, do you ever find yourself longing for the old times—the late suppers, and the brandy punches?"

And he answered,—

"Never! I shouldn't have been alive now if I'd kept on. I know it. I was going as fast as I could go,—and it wouldn't have needed the *pleuratic pericarditic gout of the heart* to have carried me off, neither. Though, Gussie, to tell the truth, I sometimes fancy that old Clavicle spread it on rather thick about that Noolah Boomerang, and the Signor Dandalion.—But that don't matter. He meant well,—and I know I was in an awful bad way. Just look at Smifferton, and Lumpkins, and old Swellpod! See how bloated they are, and how ragged they look!—That's the road I was on.—No, no, Gussie,—dont you never fear that I can hanker again for such times. Bless your dear old soul! no. Kiss me! It's better as it is, a thousand times!"

DIAMONDS OR ROSES?—WHICH SHALL IT BE?

BY LOUISE S. UPHAM.

Diamonds or Roses? now which shall it be?
  And only one hour to decide!
And all through the future comes sunshine or shade,
  By the choice of that hour to abide!

True, Archie has youth, and a stalwart arm,
  And a heart in his manly breast;
But with a youth's ardor, has chosen his bird
  Before he has builded his nest!

Has she courage and patience and love enough
  To walk by his side all the years
He is digging the cellar, and building the roof?
  Or will all drift away in her tears?

Does love mean, for *her*, but a life of toil,
  And a coarse, linsey-woolsey gown?
Are *her* taper fingers and rose-leaf palms
  By labor to grow hard and brown?

Then her thoughts difted on to the rich old Squire,
  Who had asked her his home to share;
True, he said not a word about sharing his *heart;*
  Perhaps, though, he had none to spare.

She was fearful the Squire was a trifle too old
  For a maiden of her age to wed;
For the while he was busy in thatching his roof,
  Time was busy *un*thatching his head!

But then, like a queen she would ride through the town,
  In diamonds and satins would shine,
And by the slight wand of a magical "Yes,"
  Could say, "These broad acres are mine!"

'Neath the plain little bodice her heart gave a thump,
  The Squire and his gold sped away;
For the rainbow of Hope arched a cot wreathed in flowers,
  And *Archie* and *love* won the day.

◆

A DARING GAME;

OR,

Neva's Three Lovers.

By MRS. HARRIET LEWIS,

AUTHOR OF "THE HAMPTON MYSTERY," "THE BAILIFF'S SCHEME," "THE LADY OF KILDARE," "THE OLD LIFE'S SHADOWS," ETC., ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XLV.

AN UNTIMELY ARRIVAL.

In the early dawn of a gray wild morning, Sir Harold Wynde, Lord Towyn, and Mr. Atkins arrived at Inverness. They proceeded directly to the Railway Hotel, and secured bedrooms and sitting-room, and ordered breakfast. Some attention to their toilet was necessary, and after baths and vigorous brushing, they met in their sitting-room, and here a very tempting Scottish breakfast was served to them.

They were still lingering at the table, discussing their future movements, when a knock was heard at the door, and the detective who had been set to watch Rufus Black entered the room.

He was a thin, small man, with a sharp business face, and looked the very ideal of a keen commercial traveller, and Sir Harold for the moment supposed that such was his vocation, and that the man had strayed into the wrong room. This impression was speedily corrected.

"Good-morning, my lord," said the officer, addressing himself to the young Earl. "Expected your lordship up yesterday. Good-morning, Mr. Atkins. Fine morning, sir—for Scotland. My lord, can I see you alone for a few minutes?"

"Say what you have to say here, Ryan," said the young Earl. "Mr. Atkins is a fellow-guardian of the young lady of whom we are in search, and this gentleman, Mr. Hunlow, is also a friend of Miss Wynde. Speak out, therefore. Have you any news?"

The detective glanced half uneasily at the Baronet, whose striking face announced that he was no common personage. The gray hair and gray military beard had not greatly changed Sir Harold's looks, but Ryan had never seen the Baronet before, and of course conceived no suspicion of his identity.

The Baronet arose and went to the hearth, sitting down before the fire, his face half turned away from the detective, who again addressed himself to Lord Towyn.

"There is news, my lord," he announced. "I succeeded in tracing Rufus Black up to this place. He stopped at the Caledonian. In fact, he is stopping there now."

The young Earl's face kindled with excitement.

"Then we cannot be far from Miss Wynde!" he exclaimed. "He has stopped two or three days at Inverness, and that proves that he has not much further to go. Has he been out of Inverness since he came?"

The detective's face clouded a little.

"Rufus Black arrived at Inverness the day before yesterday," he said. "Upon the afternoon of the very day on which he arrived, while I was at dinner, he went off in a cab, and did not return till late in the evening. I was lounging about the door when he came back, and he looked the very picture of despair, and came in recklessly and went to his room."

"That proves that Miss Wynde is not many miles from here," said Lord Towyn. "His despair may be readily accounted for, if he had just come from an interview with her."

"Yesterday," continued the officer, "he strolled about the town all the forenoon, and went down to the river, and visited the wharves on the Canal, and seemed to be making up his mind to something that required courage. After luncheon at the Caledonian, he took a cab and went off again, not returning till midnight last night."

"And you followed him?" cried Atkins.

"What, and put that sharp old ferret Craven Black on his guard!" ejaculated Ryan, in astonishment. "No, sir. We've got an uncommon pair to deal with. Mr. Black and his lady are as shrewd and keen as any old stagers I ever knew. It wouldn't do to let them suspect that we are on their track, or they would outwit us yet, and perhaps put the young lady in peril. People do a many things when they get desperate that will do them no good, and is sure to harm them if found out."

A stifled groan came from Sir Harold. Ryan shot a quick, suspicious glance at him.

"Then you are at a stand-still, Ryan," said Mr. Atkins impatiently. "You have treed the game and sat down to wait for us?"

"By no means, sir," answered Ryan deliberately. "I saw the cabby after Rufus Black had gone to bed, and arf-a-crown drew out of the fellow all that he knew. Mind you, my lord, that gold and silver make the best cork-screws in existence. The cabby owned up to all he knew, as I said, and a pity it wasn't more. He drove out with his fare to an estate called Heather Hills, between this and Nairn, on the coast, and a wild, bleak spot it is, according to cabby. They went up a long drive and stopped in a carriage porch, and Rufus Black he knocked and rung, and a house-maid came to the door, and he asked her something, and she pointed down the coast. And, telling cabby to wait, young Black went down the bluffs and struck across the fields. Cabby put an oil-cloth on his horse, for the wind was blowing free and strong from the sea, and sat there on his box, and sat there till it began to grow dark, and he began to swear a blue streak; and then, at last, young Black came back with a young lady dressed in black upon his arm, a hanging on to him so very fond, and a looking up at him so very tender, that cabby saw that they were lovers."

"Impossible!" cried Lord Towyn, turning pale. "I will stake my very soul on Miss Wynde's courage, and her fidelity to me. No personal fears, no cruelty even, could drive her into accepting Rufus Black. I know her brave and glorious nature; I know that she could never know a moment of weakness or yielding. The cabman has deceived you, Ryan."

"No, my lord," said the detective doggedly. "I'll stake anything your lordship likes on his good faith. Rufus Black hung over the lady as if the ground wasn't good enough for her to walk on, and she smiled up at him as loving as—as a basket of chips," said Ryan, at fault for a simile, and concluding his comparison rather ignominiously. "The lady saw cabby, and says she, blushing and smiling, 'The gentleman will stay to dinner, and you can put up your horses in the stable,' says she, 'and go into the servants' hall and get a glass of ale and your dinner.' And cabby put up his horses, and went into the kitchen."

"A queer story," muttered Atkins. "Perhaps Miss Wynde was playing a part—pretending to love Rufus Black in order to throw her jailers off their guard, and so obtain a chance of escape?"

The young Earl's face now flushed.

"I can't understand it," he said. "It is not like Miss Wynde to play such a part, even to effect her escape from her enemies. She is truth incarnate. She could never summon to her lips those false smiles; she could never for one moment allow Rufus Black to consider himself her favored lover."

"The Earl is right," said Sir Harold. "Neva could never play such a part. She is too truthful and straightforward."

The detective bent another quick glance at the Baronet.

"Did the cabman make any further discoveries?" inquired Atkins.

"One or two, of some importance," said Ryan. "In the first place, there were too few servants for so grand a house. In the second place, the young lady, with an older woman, had come up here within a week. In the third place, the house-maid said that her young mistress was called Miss Wroat, but that that was not her real name, for the young gentleman had asked for her by another name. And, altogether, an air of mystery seems to hang about the young lady. But the fact of the most importance of all is, that on the way home from Heather Hills last night, young Black got up on the box with the cabby, and asked him no end of questions about the Scotch laws concerning marriage—if licenses were necessary, if publication of banns was usual, and so on. And the young man asked him which was the best church to step into for a quiet, informal marriage, without license or publication of banns, but the marriage to be perfectly legal and binding."

"Ah!" said Atkins. "That begins to look as if he meant business."

"Young Black seemed to be in gay humor all the way home," said Ryan. "He sung to himself, and talked and laughed, and acted as if he had had a fortune left to him. And as they drove into Inverness, he told the cabby that he wanted him to take him to church this morning at a quarter to ten o'clock, and he told him that he was going to be married to a great heiress whom he adored."

"Is there not some mistake?" asked Lord Towyn excitedly. "Can he be in love with some other lady?"

"I should say not," said Atkins dryly. "Heiresses are not as plenty as oat cakes in Scotland. He's been courting Miss Wynde since last July, and was dead in love with her, as any one could see. He could not shift his affections so soon, and fix them upon another heiress. The young lady is Miss Wynde, fast enough. And she is either deluding him, meaning to denounce him to the minister at the altar, or to escape from him in Inverness, or else her courage is weakened, and she believes herself helpless, and has yielded to her enemies in a fit of despair."

"If she were alone upon the cliffs, she might then have attempted an escape," said Lord Towyn, thoroughly puzzled. "I cannot feel that this smiling, loving bride is Neva. I know she is not. But we will present ourselves at the marriage, and if the bride be Neva, we will save her!"

"I cannot think that she is Neva," said Sir Harold thoughtfully. "And yet, as Atkins says, where could he have found another heiress so soon? And how, if he loved Neva so devotedly, could he be so deeply in love with this young lady who has just come up to Inverness?"

"She comes from Kent," said Ryan. "The house-maid has heard her speak of being at Canterbury within the month."

"That settles it!" cried Atkins. "It is Miss Wynde!"

"Ryan," exclaimed Lord Towyn, "you must go now and discover to what church Rufus Black is going. We will wait here for you to guide us."

Ryan bowed and departed.

He was gone until nearly ten o'clock, and the time dragged heavily to Neva's friends, who remained in their closed sitting-room, exchanging surmises and doubts, and preparing themselves for an encounter with Craven Black and Octavia.

Sir Harold put on his greatcoat and turned up his collar, and wound a gray woolen muffler about the lower part of his face. He was standing thus disguised, hat in hand, when Ryan came back and quietly slipped into the room.

"The cab is waiting," announced the detective. "I have been at Rufus Black's heels ever since I left you. When I got back to the Caledonian, he was just going out in his cab. I rode on top as a friend of the driver, who was won over to make a friend of me by a gift of a crown. We drove to the minister's, and to the sexton's, and finally to a jeweller's, where Black bought a ring. We then went back to the hotel. And a few minutes ago young Black entered his cab again, and gave the order 'to the church.' I know the church, and we must get on our way to reach it, if we expect to get there in time to stop the ceremony."

Sir Harold and Lord Towyn hurried impetuously out of the room and down the stairs, and were seated in the cab when Atkins and the detective reached the street. These two also entered the vehicle, which rolled swiftly down the street.

A few minutes' drive brought them to the plain, substantial kirk which had been chosen by Rufus Black as the scene of his second marriage to Lally.

The four pursuers leaped from the cab, and hastily entered the edifice by its half-open door.

Passing through the dim and chilly vestibule, they pushed open one of the baize-covered inner doors, which swung noiselessly upon its well-oiled hinges, and stood within the kirk.

It was a plain church interior, without stained glass or lofty arched windows, with bare walls and ceilings, and with the plainest of gasoliers; the reading desk of solid oak, beautifully carved, was yet in keeping with the rugged simplicity of this house of worship. Here the old Covenanters might have worshipped; and here their descendants did worship, in all the stern simplicity of the faith in which they had been trained.

There was no one save the pew opener in the church at the moment of the intrusion of Sir Harold Wynde and his companions. The four passed silently down the long dim aisle, and entered a tall-backed pew, in which they were nearly hidden from view. Lord Towyn gave the pew opener a shilling, and they were left to themselves.

"It doesn't look like a wedding," said Sir Harold, shivering in his greatcoat. "If the bridegroom came on before us, where is he?"

The question was answered by the appearance of Rufus Black and the minister from the little vestry, in which they had gone to warm themselves. Rufus wore his ordinary garments, but had bought a white waistcoat and neck-tie, which gave him a clerical air. He kept his eyes upon the door with an anxious, uneasy glance.

"He's afraid she'll give him the slip, after all," muttered Ryan.

The green baize-covered door swung open and closed again. Rufus Black and the occupants of the high-backed pew in the corner near the reading desk alike started, but the arrival was only that of a few persons who had seen the open church door, and surmised that a wedding was in progress. They questioned the pew opener, and subsided into pews.

Presently a few more curious persons appeared, and took their seats also.

The occupants of the high-backed pew grew impatient. It was after ten o'clock, an early hour for a wedding, but the hour Rufus had himself appointed, in his eager impatience to claim his young wife. A cold sweat started to the young bridegroom's face. He began to think that Lally had thought better of her promise to remarry him, and had decided to give him up for the worthless, weak, irresolute being he knew himself to be.

"There's a hitch somewhere," said Ryan.

Again the baize-covered door swung open, and four persons came slowly up the aisle.

It was the bridal party at last.

Rufus Black started forward with an irrepressible eagerness, joy and relief. Sir Harold Wynde and Lord Towyn, alike pale and agitated, regarded the approaching party with burning eyes.

First of all came the steward of Heather Hills, with a girlish figure clinging to his arm. Behind these two came the steward's wife in gray silk, and Peters in black silk and crape, but with white ribbons at her throat, and white lace collar and sleeves.

Sir Harold and the young Earl looked at the three strange figures in a sort of bewilderment. They had expected to see Craven Black and Octavia. Not seeing them, they fixed their glances upon Lally.

The young wife had laid aside her mourning for her great-aunt upon this occasion, and wore a dress that Mrs. Wroat had bought for her upon their memorable shopping expedition imediately after Lally's arrival in London.

It was a delicate mauve moire, made with a long train. Over it was worn an upper dress of filmy tulle, arranged in foam-like puffs over all its surface. This too formed a trail. The corsage was of puffs of tulle over the moire, and was made low in the neck and short in the sleeves. The bride wore a tulle vail, which fell over her face in soft folds, and was confined to her head by an aigrette of diamonds. Through the filmy folds of her vail the spectators caught the gleam of diamonds on her arms, and neck, and bosom.

The steward conducted his beautiful young charge to the altar, and bride and bridegroom stood side by side, and the minister slowly took his place.

Lord Towyn made a movement to dash from his seat, but Sir Harold caught his arm in a stern grip, and compelled him to remain.

At the moment of beholding the bride, a mist had swept over the young Earl's vision. His brain had seemed to swim. For the instant he had scarcely doubted, in his excitement, that it was Neva who stood before him; but as his vision cleared, he knew that this young bride was not his betrothed wife. He knew it, although he could not see Lally's face. He missed the haughty carriage of Neva's slender figure, the proud poise of her small, noble head, the swaying grace of her movements. This young bride was not so tall as Neva, and had not Neva's dainty, imperial grace.

"It's not Neva!" he whispered excitedly. "That is Rufus Black, sure enough, but the lady is not Neva."

"You can't see her face," said Atkins. "I think it is Miss Wynde."

At this moment the bride, with a sweep of her hand, threw back her vail. As her bright, dark face, so like a gipsy's, and with a glow of happiness upon it, met the gaze of the spectators, Sir Harold stifled a groan.

Lord Towyn stared at the pretty brown face, with its fluctuating color, and the softly melting black eyes, and a dead pallor covered his face.

If this young girl was the chosen bride of Rufus Black, where was Neva? Why had Rufus given her up? The wildest fears for her life and safety possessed him.

The marriage went on. The four pursuers who had come to interrupt the proceedings sat in their high-backed pew as if utterly stupefied. What objection could they raise to the marriage of Rufus Black to a stranger who came to the church escorted by her friends? Why should they object to such a marriage? They heard the questions and answers as in a trance. The name of Lalla Bird sounded strangely upon their ears. And when the minister said, "I now pronounce you man and wife, and whom God has joined together let not man put asunder," Sir Harold Wynde and the young Earl looked at each other with terrified, inquiring eyes, that asked the question that filled their souls alike: Where was Neva?

After the prayer that followed the ceremony, the minister went into the vestry, followed by the newly married pair, the steward and his wife, and good Mrs. Peters.

The casual spectators of the wedding stole silently out of the church.

"Well, I've come up here on a fool's errand," muttered Ryan, in a tone of chagrin.

"Perhaps not," said Lord Towyn. "Rufus may be able to give us some clue to his father's whereabouts, if we approach him judiciously. I am going into the vestry to see him."

"And I too," said the Baronet, rising.

The young Earl led the way from their pew to the vestry, Sir Harold at his side, and Mr. Atkins and Ryan behind them.

The bride, all blushes and smiles, was writing her name in the marriage register, when the young Earl and his companions entered the small room. Rufus Black had just signed it, and was putting on his gloves. He gave a great start as he recognized Lord Towyn and Atkins, and stared beyond them with an unmistakable terror, as if he expected to behold the cynical, sneering face and angry eyes of his father looming up behind the intruders.

"You here, my lord?" he faltered.

"Yes, Rufus," said the young Earl, holding out his hand. "We happened to be at Inverness, and have been witnesses to your marriage. Permit us to congratulate you."

Rufus drew a long breath of relief, and shook the Earl's hand heartily.

"I thought—I thought—" he began, confused and hesitating—"I was afraid— But never mind. It's odd your being up here, my lord. How do you do, Atkins? Lally," and Rufus turned to his young wife, who was looking curiously at the new-comers, "here are some friends of mine, up from Kent. Lord Towyn, Lally, and Mr. Atkins of Canterbury."

Lally blushed and acknowledged the introduction gracefully.

"Can we see you in the church a moment, Mr. Black?" asked Lord Towyn.

Rufus consented, with that look of fear again in his eyes. He apologized for a moment's absence to his bride and her friends, who were now signing their names to the register, and accompanied his pursuers back into the church. His face brightened when he found that his father was not in waiting for him in the church.

"You have a very pretty young bride, Rufus," said the young Earl pleasantly. "We have followed you up from Kent, with the idea that you were on your way to Miss Wynde. It was in this way we happened to be at your wedding. Is Mrs. Rufus Black a recent acquaintance?"

Rufus hesitated, with a quick glance at Sir Harold's muffled face and figure. Then he said bravely, resolving to act upon his new principles of straightforwardness and courage:

"It is an odd story, Lord Towyn. I have been married before to my wife to whom I was married this morning. My father separated me from her, and I read in a London paper that she was dead. I discovered my mistake the other day in London. I met her in a picture-shop. She came off to Scotland that night, and I found her yesterday. She is an heiress now, my lord, but the same true and loving wife she used to be. I was desperate at her loss; I was half mad, I think, when I asked Miss Wynde to marry me. I never loved any one but my own wife, and I beg you to say to Miss Wynde for me, that I send my best wishes for her happiness, and I should be glad to witness her marriage with you, my lord."

"Thank you, Rufus. But where is Miss Wynde?"

A look of genuine surprise appeared in Rufus Black's eyes.

"Why, she is at Wynde Heights, with my father and her step-mother," he answered.

"She is not there. They have not been there. They have conveyed her to some lonely place, where they hope to subdue her into consenting to marry you," said Lord Towyn. "Can you give us no clue to their whereabouts?"

"None whatever, my lord. My father said they were going to Wynde Heights, and ordered me to hold myself in readiness to come to him at a moment's warning. I have not heard from him since he left Hawkhurst. I am now of age, and have flung off my father's authority forever. I know no more than you do, my lord, where my father can have gone. But one thing is sure. When he sees the announcement of my marriage in the *Times*, he'll give up the game, and bring Miss Wynde back to her home."

"He may not dare to do that," said Atkins. "He has carried matters with too high a hand, and has gone too far to make an easy retreat. Has your father any property, Mr. Black?"

"About three hundred a year," said Rufus. "His wife is rich."

"I mean, does he own any real estate?"

Rufus smiled, shook his head, and hesitated.

"I don't know," he said doubtfully. "I believe he does own a small estate somewhere, but it never brought him in a penny. It is barren, unproductive, and out of the world."

"The very place to which he would have gone!" cried Atkins. "Where is it?"

"I don't know," confessed Rufus. "You see, my father never talked of his affairs to me. In fact, I never lived with him. I was always at school, and we were more like strangers, or master and serf, than like father and son. His property may be in Wales, and it may be elsewhere. I believe there are mountains near it or around it, but I am not sure. Indeed, my lord, almost any one who ever knew my father can tell you more about his affairs than I can."

Rufus spoke with a plain sincerity that convinced his hearers of his truthfulness.

"We have had our journey to Scotland for nothing," said Atkins.

Ryan looked crestfallen.

"We will detain you no longer, Rufus," said Lord Towyn, a shadow darkening his fair and noble face. "Make our excuses to your bride for taking you from her so soon after your marriage, and accept our best wishes for your future prosperity and happiness. And now good-morning."

With an exchange of courtesies and friendly greetings the party broke up, Rufus Black returning to his young wife and her wondering friends, to make all necessary apologies for his absence from them, and Lord Towyn and his companions making their way into the street.

"What are we to do now?" demanded the young Earl, as they paused at the open door of the cab.

Sir Harold looked at his daughter's lover with haggard eyes.

"I am worn out with excitement and fatigue," said the Baronet, in a low, weary voice. "I will go back to the hotel and lie down. I must not become worn out. Heaven knows I shall need all my strength."

"And you, Atkins?" said Lord Towyn.

"I shall try to catch a nap also," said the solicitor gloomily. "I'm tired too. I can't stand it to go banging back to Kent by the first south-bound train."

"And you, Ryan?" asked the Earl.

"I don't know," said the detective. "I want to think over what has happened, and see if I can get any new ideas."

He raised his hat, and walked away.

"I'll take a stroll about the town, Sir Harold," said the Earl. "I feel strangely restless, and not at all sleepy. I slept very well last night on the train—as well as I have slept since Neva disappeared. I'll meet you and Atkins in our sitting-room at the Railway Hotel by four o'clock."

Sir Harold and Atkins entered the cab, and were driven to their hotel. The young Earl watched the cab until it disappeared from sight, and then he walked down the street, idly taking his way toward the river.

The wind blew strong and fiercely—a very winter wind, as cold and keen as if it blew directly from the North Pole, and having suggestions of icebergs in it. The young Earl shivered, and drew up his coat collar.

"Pretty weather for this season," he muttered. "The gale of night before last has not quite blown itself out, and is giving us a few parting puffs."

He walked down to the wharves and stood by the water's edge, his hat pulled over his fair brows to keep it on, his hands in his pockets, the very picture of a careless saunterer, but a great wave of despair was surging in his heart.

"My poor Neva!" he said to himself. "Where is she this wild day? Does she begin to think I am never coming to rescue her?"

His wild glances, straying over the boats in the river, settled at that instant upon a graceful yacht just coming to anchor. He could read on her stern her name—*The Arrow*. He watched her idly for a long time. He saw a boat lowered from her deck, and two sailors descend into it. A gentleman in greatcoat and tall silk hat followed them, and was rowed toward the shore.

The young Earl started, his blue eyes flaming. Something in the attitude and carriage of the gentleman excited his keenest scrutiny. As the boat came nearer, and the faces of its occupants were revealed more plainly, a strange cry sprang to Lord Towyn's lips. He had recognized in the tall stranger gentleman his own and Neva's enemy—Craven Black!

CHAPTER XLVI.

TROUBLE AHEAD FOR THE PLOTTERS.

It was a strange fatality that had brought Craven Black to Inverness at the very time when his enemies were there, engaged in a search for him.

The cold weather had set in early in his Highland retreat, and already a foretaste of winter reigned in the Wilderness. Octavia's cold had settled upon her lungs, and she coughed dismally, and in a way that made Artress tremble lest the wealth upon which they all counted and Octavia's life should die out together. Medicine was needed imperatively, and so were all manner of winter supplies: and it was for these things Craven Black had ventured from his stronghold like some beast of prey, and when he should have obtained them he intended to return to the Wilderness, and there wait patiently until Neva should yield to his infamous demands that she should wed his son.

He sprang nimbly from the boat on reaching the wharf, and taking the cigar from his mouth, said, in a voice loud enough to convey his words to the ears of Lord Towyn, whom he had not even seen:

"I am going up among the shops, boys, to make my purchases. I shall go nowhere except to the shops, for I don't want to incur any risks. Be guarded, and say nothing to any one about your business or employer. I sha'n't go aboard under two or three hours, and you can spend the time in some gin-shop. Here's a crown to divide between you, but don't get drunk. Remember, we must get all our stores aboard early, and be off at daybreak in the morning. Be back at the boat here in a couple of hours."

The men assented and took the money given them, hurrying away. Craven Black walked in an opposite direction, and was soon lost to view.

Lord Towyn turned his gaze on the yacht. He saw that a man had been left in charge of the yacht, for the captain stood on the deck smoking a pipe.

A waterman was rowing along the river near the wharves, and Lord Towyn signalled him. He came up swiftly to the edge of the wharf upon which the young Earl stood, and doffed his tarpaulin.

"Row me out to the yacht yonder," said Lord Towyn, springing into the boat. "I'll board her on the further side."

He sat down, and the waterman pulled lustily out into the stream. In a very brief space of time the boat had crept into the shadow of the yacht on its further side, and the young Earl climbed lightly to the deck.

The captain approached him, scowling.

"Hallo, you there; what do you want?" he demanded gruffly. "This here's a private yacht, sir."

"So I supposed," said his lordship coolly. "It belongs to Mr. Craven Black, doesn't it?"

The pipe fell from the captain's hands. He changed color.

"I don't know as it makes no difference who it belongs to," he said, blustering. "I work for pay, and it makes no difference to nobody who I work for. Get out of this, young man!"

"Come, come," said Lord Towyn sternly, his blue eyes blazing with a light that terrified the captain. "None of your bluff, fellow. It won't work with me. I know with whom I am dealing. You are the servant of Craven Black, and what have you to urge against my having you indicted with him for the abduction of Miss Wynde?"

The captain fairly gasped for breath. He looked helplessly toward the shore.

"I haven't done nothing," he muttered presently, quailing under the steady, fixed and stern gaze of the Earl's blue eyes. "I've hired as cap'n, and I am cap'n; but that's all. On my soul, I an't no party to no abduction."

"Your past character will be examined to throw light upon your present motives and doings," said the Earl, with a telling random shot.

The captain winced and quavered.

"Now see here, my man," said Lord Towyn, following up his advantage. "If you have done anything wrong in the past, it will be like a leaden weight to drag you down when the officers of the law arrest you for assisting in the abduction of Miss Wynde. It makes no difference to you whom I am. Your game is up. The officers of the law have accompanied us up from London. There are four of us in all upon the trail of Craven Black. Refuse to do as I tell you, and I'll call yonder policeman on the wharf and give you up on the charge of abducting a lady of rank and fortune."

"What do you want of me?" the captain asked falteringly. "I haven't had my pay from Mr. Black, and he'll kill me if I betray him."

"He need not know that you have betrayed him," said our hero. "You need not leave this vessel. All that you have to do to secure your safety is this: Tell me exactly the whereabouts of Miss Wynde, and her friends will follow the yacht at a safe distance, quite out of sight from your deck, and you can remain on board and collect your pay of Mr. Black. He need not suspect that you have betrayed him."

"And what will I gain by betraying him?"

"Your freedom from arrest. You see the policeman still stands on the wharf? So sure as you refuse to speak, and speak quickly, I'll call him!"

Lord Towyn meant what he said, and the captain comprehended the fact. He saw that Craven Black had been caught in a trap, and with the usual instinct of villainy, he resolved to save himself from the general ruin.

"You swear that I shall be protected if I tell the truth?" he asked.

"I do."

"I suppose it's penal servitude for abducting a young lady," said the captain. "Jack said so last night. Blamed if I haven't been sick of the job, any how. I don't mind a mutiny at sea, when there's cause, but I can't relish making war on a helpless girl, and I haven't from the first."

"Come to the point. Where is Miss Wynde?"

"At a place up in the mountains owned by Mr. Black, and called the Wilderness."

"Miss Wynde is there, and Mrs. Craven Black?"

"Yes; and the servants, and Mrs. Artress."

"How far from here is the Wilderness?"

"About twenty miles, if you could go direct, which you can't. It's forty miles by water. You know Cromarty Frith, up in Ross—and—Cromarty?"

Lord Towyn assented.

"You go about half-way up the Frith and turn into a river that leads up among the mountains. The stream grows narrower as you ascend, but the water remains deep, and at last your boat fetches into a small loch lying at the foot of the mountains and surrounded by them. A steep mountain rises right before you. Half-way up its side lies a wide ledge, and on that the house is built. It's a wild-looking spot, sir, and a dreary one. It's mighty cold up there, and I haven't relished the prospect of spending the winter there, not by no means."

The Earl asked several questions, to make himself conversant with the route, and also to make sure that the man was not lying to him. Assured on this point, he said:

"Craven Black intends to return home in the morning. He must not suspect that you have betrayed him. Keep the secret, and we will do so."

The captain's look of fear showed conclusively that he would be careful not to allow his employer to suspect his treachery.

After a few further words, Lord Towyn reentered his boat and returned to the shore.

"Anything more, sir?" asked the waterman, as the boat ground against the wharf.

"Nothing more—unless," added the Earl, with a sudden thought, "you could direct me to a small vessel, a fast sailer, that I could hire for a day or two. I should want a couple of men to take charge of her."

"I don't know of any such boat," said the waterman, scratching his head. "And yet *The Lucky* might suit you, sir, though it isn't a gentleman's boat. She's built for a fishing vessel, is brand-new, and had a trial sail the day afore the gale, when she went like a bird."

"I'd like to see her. Take me out to her."

The Lucky lay out in the stream, half a mile further inland. Lord Towyn rowed out to her, and found her joint-owners, two brothers, on board. He went over the vessel, and found it new and clean, and in fine order. The owners were willing to let the little craft with their services, and the young Earl hired it for a week, paying in advance twice the sum the thrifty Scotsmen demanded for it.

"She must be provisioned immediately," said Lord Towyn. "Her destination is a secret, which I will tell you in the morning. I have three friends who will make the excursion with me. We shall want blankets, and all kinds of cooked meats and stores. We must leave Inverness at day-break. Come ashore with me, one of you, and I will select the stores we are likely to need."

One of the brothers accompanied the Earl ashore, and conducted him to various shops, Lord Towyn keeping a keen look-out for Craven Black, in order to avoid him.

Blankets and mattresses and bed linen were sent down to *The Lucky;* various kinds of cooked meats, including rounds of roast beef, roasted chickens, meat puddings, ham and veal pies, smoked salmon and broiled ham, were packed in hampers and sent aboard; and Lord Towyn added baskets of fruits, both dried and fresh, and jams and confitures of every sort in abundance, besides boxes of biscuits of every description.

"It looks like a v'y'ge to Ingy," said Macdonald, the one of the two brothers who had accompanied Lord Towyn ashore, contemplating the array of stores with kindling eyes. "We can provision a ship's crew to Australy."

"Whatever is left, you will be welcome to," said the Earl, smiling.

The young lord saw his new purchases deposited on board *The Lucky*, and himself attended to the arrangement of the little cabin, and then paying his waterman liberally, he returned to his hotel.

The day had passed swiftly, and he found that it was nearly five o'clock of the short afternoon, and the street lamps were lighted, when he entered his hotel and went up stairs, two steps at a time, to his sitting-room.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

◆

—There are some men so exquisitely selfish, that they go through life not only without ever being loved, but without even wishing to be.

IS IT WORTH THE PRICE?

BY ETHEL LYNN.

More men in search of the icy pole,
The mythic staff around which we roll.
More treasure, ships, and lives may be,
All sacrificed to the Polar Sea.

What if they find both the Pole and Sea?
What better then shall earth's children be?
Who wants a home that he needs must share
With a friendly seal or polar bear?

Silence and glaciers, snows and fogs,
Train-oil and darkness, and wolfish dogs;
And though Aurora may gild the night,
One needs must freeze while he sees the sight.

No ship on the errands of Commerce bent
Would cross by the new-found continent;
No church will rival the iceberg's spire,
No chimney shelter a household fire.

"Science?" I know. As the old wife waits,
Going backward down to the Blessed Gates,
Looking earthward yet for some token set
Of the brave Sir John, whom she can't forget;

Think you, all the charts that explorers gave
Can hide from her that unsodded grave?
Think you the wives of the missing men
Can say God-speed to the search again?

There shall be new tales of beleaguered ships,
Amid toppling bergs and the ice-floe "nips;"
Of men homesick for the meadow sod,
And the sound of bells in the house of God.

Snow-blind and faint with the ceaseless stare,
They shall stumble on through the summer's glare;
Weary and worn for the vanished light,
They shall fight the gloom of the Arctic night.

Is there life to aid, or a soul to save,
E'en a cairn to lay on a brave man's grave;
Is there wrong to right, or a heart to bless,
Shall the search go on? Yes, in God's name, Yes.

But this: to outline on a chart anew,
Where a good ship carried her colors through,
To claim fresh fields of the sterile ice
At such fearful cost—Is it worth the price?

ONLY A SONG.

BY MARY KYLE DALLAS.

Monsieur Dufonte, who had a large family and a small income, hired the upper floor of a large building in the city of Paris; and to reduce his rent, underlet a room to young Monsieur Fernande, the musical composer, of whose compositions no one as yet had heard anything.

It was a little narrow room, with one very high window; but it had this advantage: out of this window one could, at the risk of breaking one's neck, catch a glimpse of the beautiful prima donna, Mdlle. La C——, as she fanned herself on the balcony of the first floor. For this sensible reason had Monsieur Fernande hired the apartment.

He was dreadfully in love with her, though they had never spoken to each other, and he fondly and falsely believed that she knew that he had thrown her bouquets, and had given him special thanks for them as she held them against her pretty chin, and bowed her pretty head over them and smiled with the beaming smile of an actress down upon the audience.

If ever he made his name and fortune, then she should know, but not until then. So he loved on in silence, and worked at his compositions, and offered them to publishers, and had them "declined with thanks."

Now and then, of course, he sold a song; but the songs did not become popular, and he must have starved to death but that he now and then played the piano for some dancing party. At the best, he lived on bread and coffee and a little soup.

In his room he had an old piano, a desk, a chair, a meerschaum, and a little charcoal furnace. When he had five francs in his pocket, and it was not rent day, he felt rich.

Mdlle. La C—— had every luxurious lounge and couch and sofa to be bought for money. She lavished gold on her friends, on herself, on her pet poodle, on the beggars who held out their crooked hands, and showed their distorted faces at the door of the house, as she tripped from it to her carriage.

They said she had been a peasant child, whose sweet voice, as she stood singing at the door of a little hut, had caught the ear of a wealthy music worshipper, who had had her taught in consequence. They tell such stories of so many prima donnas. No one would have guessed, from her manner now, that she ever knew the value of a sou. Yet with all this extravagance she was growing rich, and could make a little fortune in a night.

Young, beautiful, adored, who could be happier? And yet, though she could sing so divinely, she could not have composed one of those little songs which were written in the garret over her head, to save her bright young life. Each one was a gem, and probably M. Fernande knew it, for genius ought to recognize its own work. Still, rattling marches, waltzes that were the same old thing over again, and bits from well-known operas twisted into galops, sold; while his little songs lay neglected on the counter, and others never reached the counter at all, being scorned from the first by publishers with no music in their souls, however much there may have been in their shops.

If, indeed, some well-known singer would have sung one of them—Mademoiselle La C——, for instance—then there might have been a change. The thought crept into poor Fernande's heart by degrees; at last it strengthened into a resolve; but it must be the best of all that he should lay before his idol, the very best—nothing else would do."

So he wrote in his attic room, the poor composer, and below, the happy song-bird trilled her songs, and laughed and chatted, and was carelessly generous, and never even knew of his existence who, evening after evening, watched her, listened to her, envied the men who had the right to sit beside her, hold her fan; perhaps—who knew?—her hand also; the men one of whom might one day be her favored lover. And she enjoyed her happy butterfly existence, and knew nothing about him.

At last, in some moment of romantic influence, our composer also turned poet. He wrote the words of a song which he called, "Love's Dying Dream," and he fitted to it an air so sweet, so gentle, so tender, so plaintive, that playing it upon his old piano, he knew it to be the best of all that he had ever done—the bright particular gem fit to lay before his lady.

He copied it out daintily; he wrote a pretty note without any signature but that of "An Admirer," and he resolved to leave it at her door and await the result.

"If I should ever hear her sing it, I should be so happy—so happy," he said to himself, "I should be willing to die."

What strange things we say sometimes! Did you ever say anything, not quite meaning it, that afterward proved itself true, though not as you intended it? I have.

And one morning he said:

"To-day I will do it;" and with these words left his little room.

He ran down stairs with the precious little parcel in his hand, and stood before the door that led to Mdlle. La C——'s suit of rooms with a palpitating heart. He had intended to knock, and leave the music and the note with a servant, but—ah, how unfortunate!—the door stood open. Opposite he saw her dainty boudoir, and it was empty. He would steal in and put the music upon her table, and so leave it. If she liked it, he should hear her singing it sometime, and then he might speak. He crept in: he laid the parcel down softly, and with reverence, but as he did so his eye fell upon a miniature. It was a portrait of his divinity herself, and it was set in costly gems. These he neither noticed nor cared for. All he saw was the sweet face. He stooped over it; he examined it; he took it in his hand.

"It is *herself!*" he said. "It is wonderful!"

And I think he would have kissed it, but that at that moment he heard a little scream and a savage growl.

He turned. The scream came from Mdlle. La C——, the growl from a gentleman who accompanied her, and on the instant two hands came down on Fernande's shoulders, and the miniature was wrested from him.

"How careless of Auguste," cried the lady, "to leave the door open for thieves to enter by."

The gentleman lustily called for help.

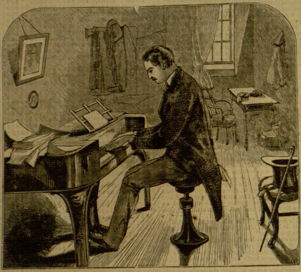
Fernande said nothing. Conscious of his terrible position, he was stricken dumb; and it was as one passes through the changing scenes of a dream, that he knew himself to be arrested and cast into prison.

The prima donna appeared against him when the proper time came. She had found this man in her room. He had a valuable ornament in his hand. She believed that he intended to steal it. She had never seen him before—O no, never.

At this the young man felt that it would be well to be dead. She had never seen him before! Then she had not smiled upon him when he threw her that bouquet of Provence roses. It was all fancy. He had not caught her eyes. She had never noticed him.

The gentleman who had been with Mademoiselle gave his evidence, only he was fiercer, and called the hapless Fernande a thief, a brigand and a rascal, when he alluded to him. And Fernande could only say that he was not guilty. He would say nothing else in his misery. He would not even give his calling, and bring his respectability forward by way of defence.

"I am named Fernande, and I have twenty-three years, and I am nothing and nobody."



This he said, when called upon to account for himself, and nothing more. And he was written down vagrant, and condemned to six months' hard labor as a thief.

Mddle. La C—— went home pouting, and declaring that she "hated to go to such dreadful places." She eat a delightful little lunch, and afterward finding a packet upon her table, opened it and read Fernande's little anonymous note, at which she laughed and hummed over the song, pronouncing it "very pretty." A few days after she practiced it, and on being encored one night, bethought her to sing it.

Poor Fernande! if he could but have been there to have seen how the women wept over his pretty little lay of love and death, and to have heard how the applause rang.

After that, the manager besought Mademoiselle to sing "Love's Dying Dream" every night, and the lady obeyed his request.

Amateur singers went mad over it, and it was published. Having the name of no composer upon it, it was called Mdlle. La C——'s song, and by many was believed to be her own; and it sold as never song sold before.

One day, with a party, she visited the prison where Fernande was confined.

She stood amid her little circle of cavaliers, and said to one in authority in the place:

"What do they like, these people? Shall I sing a little love song?"

"As Mademoiselle pleases," said the man. "Every one understands that theme."

And Mademoiselle smiled, and tried her voice with a little trill, and began poor Fernande's song, "Love's Dying Dream."

Oh the eager, glittering eyes that watched her! Oh the flushed cheeks, the hurried breath! Oh the mad throbbings of the heart of Number Twenty-four, as he whispered to himself:

"It is my song! It is my song!"

"What is the matter?" whispered Number Twenty-three to Number Twenty-four. "I say, mon ami, speak."

"What is the matter?" asked the singer of the Superintendent, as the last notes of her song died upon her lips. "There seems to be some commotion."

"There is a little," said the Superintendent calmly. "Number Twenty-four has caused it."

"Has he escaped?" cried the lady, looking about her as though she had heard that a tiger had broken loose.

"After a manner, Mademoiselle," said the Superintendent. "He is dead."

"These people never have any sense of propriety," said Mademoiselle. "How dreadful!"

They buried Fernande in whatever spot of ground is given to pauper prisoners. And Mdlle. La C—— sang on until she sang herself into the heart of some man with a title; but as long as she sings at all, she will sometimes sing "Love's Dying Dream." It is so pretty, so sweet, and then it was the work of an unknown admirer. It is a favorite with Madame, and always has been.

No one now remembers Number Twenty-four, named Fernande, who was so impolite as to die while Mdlle. La C—— was singing.

THE PARSON'S LESSON.

Deacon Slocum, as had been his custom for years, had prepared a fine, fat turkey as a Christmas present to his minister, and he called upon his son Tom to carry it over to the parsonage. But Tom objected.

"How now, my son?" demanded the deacon. "You know this is my custom. You carried a turkey to the parson last year, and your elder brothers had done it in the years before you were big enough."

"And," retorted Tom, "Parson Grummer was never the man to say, 'Thank ye.' He takes it as a matter of course. It don't set well on my stummick to have a man snub me when I'm doin' him a favor."

"But, Tom, you must remember, Parson Grummer is a peculiar man. He means well."

"And so I s'pose old Brindle *means* well enough when she whisks her tail into your eye; but I've noticed that you didn't seem to like it."

The good deacon smiled, and patted his boy on the shoulder.

"Carry the turkey over to the parson, Tom, and if he don't thank you for it, I will."

Tom shouldered the fowl—fat, fair, and large—and carried it to the minister's house, where he found the host in the sitting-room with a number of brother clergymen for company.

"Mr. Grummer," said Tom, depositing his burden upon the table with a thump, "there's a turkey father sent you. He told me to bring it, and I've brought it."

And with this Tom would have turned upon his heel and left; but the minister called him back.

"Thomas, you did right to obey your father. Obedience is a good thing; but you might improve upon your manner of obedience,—you might have done your errand a little more respectfully."

"How?" asked Tom, curtly.

"Wait you here, my lad, and I will show you. You are young, and I will give you a lesson in politeness. Now you will imagine that you are the parson, and that I am the boy."

The parson took up the turkey, and went out. Presently he returned; took off his hat; laid the fowl carefully upon the table, and then, with a low bow, said,—

"Parson Grummer, here is a turkey which my father sends to you, and begs that you will accept it with the compliments of the season."

Tom stepped forward, and turned the turkey over.

"It is a very fine turkey," he said, "and I am not only grateful to your good father for it, but I am very grateful to you for having brought it. Tell your father that I am not unmindful of the many kindnesses I have received at the hands of himself and family. And now, Thomas, if you will take this down into the kitchen and give it to the cook, I will call Mrs. Grummer and bid her give you a twenty-five cent piece."

The parson for a moment looked blank, but the audible smile of his clerical guests stirred up his good-humor, and he accepted the lesson, and sent the lad off with the piece of silver.

C.

SCIENCE.

Professor Huxley, in his last lecture at Manchester, which was on the subject of yeast, gave the following interesting account of the origin of the word alcohol, as applied to spirits: "Alcohol," he said, "originally meant a very fine powder. The women of the Arabs and other Eastern people are in the habit of tinging their eyelashes with a very fine black powder which is made of antimony, and they call that 'kohol,' and the 'al' is simply the article put in front of it, so as to say 'the kohol.' And up to the seventeenth century, in this country, the word alcohol was employed to signify any very fine powder. You find in Robert Boyle's works that he uses 'alcohol' for a very fine subtle powder. But then this name of anything very fine and very subtle came to be specially connected with this fine and subtle spirit obtained from the fermentation of sugar; and I believe that the first person who fairly fixed it as the proper name of what we now commonly call spirits of wine was the great French chemist Lavoisier," who lived in the latter part of the last century.

The spectroscope will soon become an important instrument to students of weather phenomena, if, as is conjectured by European meteorologists, the changes in the humidity of our atmosphere are invariably accompanied by certain easily observed changes in the solar spectrum. Thus it is believed that the blue of the spectrum is shortened when the quantity of vapor in the air increases; and other more delicate correspondences are noted by Commander Maclear. None of them can be regarded as established, however, without further observation.

The following interesting passage occurs in a review, by the *Medical Press*, of a report of certain surgical cases in the United States Army: "Under 'poisoned wounds,' a case of a soldier bitten by a water moccasin (*Toxicophis piscivorus*) is reported. The patient was permitted to consume *three quarts of whiskey in two hours!* to neutralize the poison; he recovered from the effects of the whiskey. Our own experience while serving on the frontiers in the army of the United States led us to regard the bite of this species of reptile as harmless."

The great aurora of February 4th, which was visible over so large a portion of the earth, was exceedingly brilliant at the Cape of Good Hope, as we learn from a letter to the Astronomer Royal of England, written by Mr. E. J. Stone of the Cape Town observatory. He says it was the most conspicuous auroral display witnessed in that region for fifty years, and that the natives throughout the colony were considerably frightened by the unusual luminosity of the sky.

A work on the glaciers of Switzerland is to be edited and published under the joint auspices of the Swiss Alpine Club and the Swiss Natural History Society. All the information, scientific and general, concerning the Swiss glaciers, will be so arranged in this work that under the name of each glacier can be found a detailed account of all that is known concerning it. Such a publication will be of great value to physicists and mountaineers alike.

The great Northern shrike, or butcher-bird, which preys upon the English sparrows in the parks of New York and other cities, is so dainty that it eats only the brains of its victims. So we learn from a letter published in the *American Naturalist*, which describes the method in which a butcher-bird killed a sparrow by squeezing its head into a crotch made by the fork of two branches, each about half an inch thick.

The coast of the island of New Guinea is to be explored by a private expedition from Australia, numbering thirty persons. Interesting discoveries in geography and natural science are hoped for; but as each member pays five hundred dollars toward the expenses of the party, they have arranged to secure themselves against loss by going pearl fishing, in case of a failure to effect a landing in New Guinea.

About five years ago, a French ship from Java unloaded a cargo of sugar-cane seedlings at the solitary island of Reunion, in the Indian ocean, between Mauritius and Madagascar. Among the plants some lizards were noticed, one of which was caught, but the others escaped; and now the species is perfectly naturalized, though previously wholly unknown there, and there are hundreds of them on the island.

A contrivance for steering ships, called the fish-tail rudder, has been exhibited at a meeting of the Society of Naval Architects, and is highly approved by distinguished officers of the British Navy. It is arranged to produce a motion exactly like that of a fish with the upper part of his tail, when turning around.

Whoever sends the best essay on the theory and practice of irrigation to the secretary of the Agricultural Society of France, before the end of the present year, will receive a prize of four hundred dollars and a medal.

The internal use of carbolic acid is said to have been found unquestionably advantageous in a large class of cases of dyspepsia, known as the fermentative class.

The number of spots observed on the sun in 1871 was smaller than that recorded in 1870, and the regular decrease toward the minimum number is now going on.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

Hermione says: "Once before I applied to you for advice on a certain subject, and following your advice to the letter, I accomplished my wishes. I now again appeal to you, hoping to derive again satisfaction. I am, as I told you before, perfectly alone in the wide world. In the position I now hold in my native village, that of teacher, I frequently meet with gentlemen of intelligence and refinement, but who move in a different circle of society from mine. I entirely lose control of myself when in company with some of those gentlemen, as I sometimes am, for I am an ardent admirer of intellectual persons, and cannot, as I said before, restrain my admiration. There is one in particular, whom I not only admire, but love. He, however, is not aware of it. I have promised to correspond with him, with a view to mutual improvement, he being engaged in teaching in another city. As I informed you, dear *Ledger*, he is not aware that I regard him with any other feelings than those of friendship, and were he to think so, I fear the correspondence would be discontinued. I know I ought to have sense, for I am near twenty-four years of age, but as yet have never loved any one and feel perfectly childish, for I am treated as a child on account of being somewhat diminutive. Now, my dear *Ledger*, advise me what to do under the circumstances. I forgot to state, that at the time he formed my acquaintance, he also became acquainted with a friend of mine, whom he evidently admires very much, and this is exactly what places me in a dilemma. Do assist me out of this trouble. I will rely implicitly on your advice. What is your opinion of my writing? as I am anxious to have it criticized before engaging gentlemen correspondents, having never had the pleasure of having one before. Please answer at your earliest convenience, and excuse me for trespassing on your time with a lengthy note." You had better defer this correspondence for mutual improvement, till you see how your "friend" deals with his admiration. Your writing is very fair; one or two of your words will look better in print from our correction. We are of opinion, on general principles, that a young lady of twenty-four, who "cannot restrain her admiration," had better not enter on a correspondence with a gentleman situated as is this one. All ladies who read this will appreciate the reasons without our stating them. Teachers—male and female—with active minds and much spare time, need much good sense in matters of this kind.

Debater (Louisiana State University) says: "I have often read with much pleasure your answers to correspondents, and would ask of you the following favor: I am a member of a debating society in this school, and we intend to debate during our final exercises the question, 'Has the United States, as a republic, arrived at the zenith of her glory?' My opponents will attempt to prove that the Constitution of the United States has been made so corrupt, and that we are ruled by such a set of money-seeking men, that a civil war is inevitable, and that the form of government in the United States will change, and the whole United States will be divided into different nations or governments. Dear sir, if you will give me some points, and the groundwork of some arguments to sustain and prove that the United States will not change her form of government, I will be more than obliged to you. I would ask you to reply, if possible, by mail, as I am obliged to have my speech ready for speaking by the ——," etc. Does not our young friend, whose name we withhold, see how unfair it would be for the *Ledger* to send down its thunderbolts by mail—we never reply by mail unless an enormous retaining fee is inclosed—to be hurled by his hand at the devoted heads of his opponents? Why, it is by just such pretentiousness and assumption that we are threatened. If we are to be great, let us be true as men, true in love, in money, in society, in club, in politics, in religion, meaning what we say, and saying what we mean. *Your* employment of *our* "points" as yours would hardly be thus true. It is on such a false basis that quacks set up as doctors, lawyers' clerks for lawyers, and politicians as statesmen. We must no more steal brains than bonds. And finally, we give this lecture without a fee, and without the hope of an honorary degree.

Manning says: "I have been a constant reader of your interesting paper for the last six years. Never having troubled you before, I now come to you for advice. My case is as follows: Upon meeting a lady, I become so embarrassed and nervous, that if I undertake to speak, my voice trembles so that I can hardly utter a word, and it is a source of great mortification to me, as I think that everybody looks on me with pity, and I cannot bear it. The only way by which I can appear like myself is by taking a stimulant. I have no desire for it; in fact it is a great effort for me to take it. I like the ladies very much and love their company, but cannot remember of ever being in their society without being under the influence of liquor—not so that any one can notice it, as it takes very little to quiet me. I am very much afraid I will acquire a habit which I will not be able to break from, as I am but twenty years old. Now, dear Mr. Editor, if you know of any other way by which I can overcome this nervousness, I beg of you to reply to this through your paper, and no doubt you will be thanked by many who are in my fix." We earnestly advise you never to touch stimulant again. Your temperament renders such a course as this almost certain ruin. Better forego female society than die a drunkard. If in any other particular your habits are bad, give them over. Take air, exercise and enough sleep; and if your nervousness continues, consult a doctor of good character and good sense. The probability is that you only miss in yourself that fluent impudence by which some young men are marked, and which makes them intolerable bores to all women of good sense.

Oildom (Pennsylvania) says: "Myself and two friends, having exhausted the small amount of legal knowledge that we possess, have concluded to submit the following questions to you for decision. Would a written contract, drawn in the presence of witnesses, binding two parties together as man and wife, so to live as long as agreeable to both parties, be a legal marriage? And if so, would they be legally divorced on separating, without the aid of the courts? By answering, you will confer a favor on us." If such an agreement as you mention were put in force by the parties living together as man and wife, publicly, their marriage would be held as valid in some States. The mere informal agreement of parties to live together as man and wife, followed by such living together, has been held to constitute a valid marriage. But such a couple could not legally divorce themselves, even though they should have stipulated, in their marriage contract, that they might do so. As soon as they are married, no matter by what means or in what form, their marriage becomes subject to the laws of the State, and can only be set aside, or annulled, by due legal process. The courts are not particular as to the way in which parties contract marriage, but they are very particular as to the mode of divorce. It is far better, however, and more respectable, to be married publicly, and with the customary formalities.

E. H. (Iowa) says: "I solicit your advice upon a subject that is of great importance to me. I am thirty years old. I am engaged to a physician, who is three years my junior. He loves me devotedly, and I *try* to reciprocate his love. He is a 'divorced widower.' I have often heard that a 'divorced widower' doesn't make a *kind* husband; if the assertion is true, my future happiness will be forever blighted. My aversion to being called an *old maid* induced me to promise to marry him. Now, Mr. Editor, did I do right in promising to marry him because I disliked to be called an *old maid?* Do you think it is according to the law of God for a divorced person to remarry? Please answer my questions, and give me your advice upon the subject, through the columns of your valuable paper, and oblige one who will feel greatly favored." A "divorced widower" is not a clear description. The law of God says the marriage bond may be dissolved for adultery, and forbids the remarrying of the criminal person. There seems no law against the innocent sufferer marrying again. It is not right to give a promise merely to avoid being called an old maid. There are old maids that are a blessing to their race. We see no force in the saying quoted, to you; it has no application unless where the wife has been compelled by cruelty, or the like, to get a divorce. We hope you will be wise, good and happy.

Nellie E. E. writes: "I am eighteen, and have been engaged to a young gentleman for a year. In that time we have never had a quarrel. But now our engagement is broken off, and it came about in this way: My brother has a friend staying with him, and some one told the gentleman to whom I was engaged that my brother's friend was making love to me, and that we were going to be married. Well, he wrote to me asking me to break the engagement with him, and telling me he had ceased to love me. Of course I released him. The other day he told his cousin, who is my most intimate friend, the reason for wishing our engagement broken, adding at the same time that he loved me better than ever, only he would have nothing to do with any young lady that was engaged to two gentlemen at the same time. Now what I want you to tell me is this: if I had not better tell him that it is not so—that I am not, and never was, engaged to my brother's friend. I think it nothing but right to Will.'s friend, as well as myself, for he never has made love to me in his life, only I am afraid my former lover will think I want the engagement renewed, and I would not have him think so for the world." Yes; let him know the whole truth. He was over-credulous; but it was probably in consequence of his great love for you, which made him jealous of every supposed rival.

"Greeny" says: "Will you please inform me, through your answers to correspondents, whether a bridegroom should be dressed in full evening dress, or simply a dress suit? and also what is the usual price paid to ministers for performing the marriage ceremony? and oblige one who has gained a great amount of useful information from your answers to correspondents." If the marriage is in the evening, then evening dress is proper; not otherwise. The amount of fees to ministers varies greatly with the circumstances and views of the parties. In New York, we think it probable that persons in moderate circumstances give twenty and twenty-five dollars. The rich naturally give more; and those who count themselves poor, less. Ministers, as a class, are not overpaid, and so long as this custom remains, one had better err on the generous side.

Tessa says: "As I want a little advice, I come to you. I have a naughty boy, and I don't know what to do with him. He will not mind, and does not speak the truth. I think that if he had some one that was firm and gentle, he would be a good boy. He is small, for his age. He will be fifteen the twelfth of this month—May. Can you tell me of some place where I could put him, where he would be properly trained and brought up to be a good young man?" There are doubtless schools where your boy would get good training, and have good examples set before him; but such a boy, however, needs the right kind of a home above all other earthly influences, and you should school yourself to give him *that*, no matter at what cost of feeling and self-sacrifice.

Longwood writes to us that she has done a base and wicked thing involving malice and forgery; would now like to get out of it, and wishes to know how. It is no part of our object to save wrong-doers from the just and natural consequences of their acts on any other than the simple principle, Confess and forsake.

C. T. W.'s circumstances only warrant his writing as follows: "Four years since I became acquainted with a very estimable young lady. After an acquaintance of perhaps a twelvemonth we were engaged, but on account of both parties being quite young, no special time was appointed for our marriage. We loved one another dearly. Perhaps a year after our engagement she was accidentally poisoned, and on account of it has been in a very poor state of health for nearly two years, and all hopes are given up of her entire recovery. Her parents were aware of our engagement, and were willing that the marriage should take place at the proper time. They knew also that she sincerely loved me, and that it gave her trouble, and made her worse than she would otherwise have been, to think our marriage could not take place. Consequently they induced her to write me, and ask that the engagement be broken on account of her health. She did so. Her parents also saw me, and told me she was a great deal troubled on my account, and asked me to grant her request. They also wish me to go and see her, and have a verbal understanding. Now, Mr. Editor, I have stayed away from her for quite a year, because it was thought she would be worse to see me and talk with me. She lives at another town, twenty-five miles distant. What I would like you to answer is this: Should I give up all hope of the lady's hand? Should I grant her request—or, rather, the request of her parents? Or should I hold on with the same tenacity that I have for the last four years? Should I go and see her? or do you think she would suffer disadvantage on account of it? And, also, what advice would you give as to treatment of her case? What can be done to rid her system of the poison, it having been taken inwardly? Answer these." We give it up. With sincere sympathy for the lady and the writer, we are obliged to say that the parents and the family physician are the natural and competent authorities in this case. The *Ledger* has not the materials for an opinion.

Pauline (Elmwood) says: "I can scarcely summon the temerity to write and ask your advice upon a subject of such grave importance as love, being merely a girl, and I believe a knowledge of the 'tender passion' is forbidden the young by old heads. However, I beg your indulgence, and have every confidence in your opinions and counsel, and hope you will freely extend them to me. I am sixteen years of age, and have courting me a widower aged forty-five, the father of two children, the elder a boy of twenty, and a girl sixteen, the latter just a few months older than myself. My lover is purely and wholly devoted to me, as he has constantly persevered against discouragements, in his zeal to win me, and after deliberate consultation with my heart, I find his love is fully and warmly reciprocated. My friends oppose me, and think it absurd, and an anomaly in love, for me to unite my destiny with one so far my superior in years. Do you concur with them? Would you dissolve the compact? I am eager to hear from you, and will esteem it a favor, if you will, through the columns of your paper, answer me at your earliest convenience." We do not approve of dissolving compacts unless some change has taken place in the circumstances that will justify the act. Had you consulted us before entering on the reciprocating process, we might have advised caution; but now we can only wish you great good sense, and much happiness, to your enjoyment of which we see no natural and necessary barrier. "Better be an old man's darling than a young man's slave."

Justice (Indiana) says: "I have been a reader of your valuable paper since 1856, and have never asked a question till now. I want to know if a will can be broken, where a parent dies and leaves his property, worth three thousand dollars, to two of his children, and not one cent to the rest, and the will is written with different colored inks, and one of the persons that got the property is a witness to it. My father left his real estate to a daughter as long as she lives, and then to her children; if she has no children, it is to be equally divided, at her death, with her brother, to whom the father left his money. I am going to go by your advice, for the rest of us have just as good a right, and better, than the brother who got the money, for he got his share of the estate long ago. Father told me often he should have to pay for the rest, if he wanted it. It is his name that is to the will as a witness; and I think that father was improperly influenced, or he never would have made such a will. He lived in Illinois. Please advise me what to do, for we are going by what you say." Every State has its own laws as to wills, and you must consult some Illinois lawyer, as you say your father lived in that State, in regard to the law of your case. It is likely that the fact that one of the legatees acted as a witness to the will invalidated it, unless there were enough witnesses, in addition to him, to comply with the requistions of the Illinois statutes in regard to the attestation of wills.

Timothy says: "I am in love with a young lady here, and until recently my love seemed to be reciprocated, and we were engaged to be married; but after a short time she desired to break the engagement and live as friends for two years. At first I remonstrated, but at last submitted, and she gave me permission to call upon her once in a while, and if in two years I loved her as I did, then we would be married. About two weeks ago she refused to have me call any more, but I demanded an explanation. She gave the following: that she thought we could never be more than friends, and that the two years was simply a 'blind.' She would not say whether she loved me or not, but when she sees me with any one she gets very jealous and scolds me. Would you, or not, keep up a stout heart, or let the matter rest just where it is? She says my parents would never submit to my marrying a poor girl like her." Either the young lady does not know her own mind, or she has some reason to be apprehensive of wounded feeling from your parents' side, and is generously letting you off, and yet cannot quite shake off so fully the feeling proper to an engagement, as to be content to see you under other influence. If it is the former, you had better let the matter drop for the present; if the latter, you had better reassure her and persevere. You only can judge which is the true state of the case; we cannot.

Mars (New York) says: "I have been a subscriber of the *Ledger* for the last three years, and now seek some information for the first time, and crave for a reply. Supposing a native of England, but a resident of the United States since a mere child, wishes to join the British army, but through long absence is not very well posted about things, and before going over there wishes to find out full particulars. Now can you inform me the names of the proper parties to apply to, or could the British Consul in New York inform me; and if so, what would be the best way of approaching him: to go in person and state your case, or write a letter to him? Please let me know at your earliest convenience, and oblige." In England all information will be given at the Horse Guards, London. The British Consul can probably—if you send him particulars as to age, means and ambition, with a stamped envelope for reply—save you a journey to London. If you take our advice you will be saved from the writing. We put it in a syllable—Don't. Most British officers enter young, and pay for serving; and any one who would leave America to become a private is ready for another place. The Lunatic Asylums are as well managed here as in Britain.

Anxious (New York) says: "I am in great trouble. I have been engaged to a young man for ten months, but about nine months ago I broke off with him, as he did not treat me right. He then came to my father, and promised him faithfully to be different. He also asked me to forgive him; which I did. Since then I had the misfortune to lose my father, and about six weeks after that we set our wedding-day. All was right until, four days before it should have taken place, he told me he could not get married, as he was sick and had to go travelling. He then did not come to see me for almost a week. I know that he did not go away, for I heard from reliable parties that he attended to his business every day. Now the question I want to ask you is this: Would you advise me to marry this man? I told him I would not be his wife, and he said I should never marry another, and promised he would be different in the future. He has made that promise before, and it is a great fault of his that he is not truthful." If you are certain that the young man wilfully deceives you, quit him. But do not make any mistake about it.

U. S. says: "I have been a reader of your paper for about twelve years, and have always found your answers to correspondents very interesting and instructive. Will you please answer one question for me? If a person commits the crime of bigamy, and the last partner dies, can that person be arrested for the crime, or does the death of the last wife—supposing the criminal to be a man—free him from the consequences of his crime? Please answer soon." The death of the second wife would not free a bigamist from the legal responsibilities of his crime, any more than the death of a man who had been robbed would exonerate the highwayman who had robbed him.

Occasional Reader (Pasa) "wishes to know whether a young man who by *self-study* has mastered the higher mathematics, English grammar, rhetoric, Latin, and the common branches, could obtain a first-class position as teacher without being obliged to attend some college or Normal school in order to obtain a diploma." Yes, there are many such cases. Persevere; pursue your plans; make yourself acquainted with details of human life, and become practical. Your self-improvement will be promoted by your becoming—not an "occasional," but—a steady reader of the *Ledger*. You will learn to use apter words than, for example, "self-study."

Inquirer asks: "At whose instance did Bunyan suffer his twelve years' imprisonment? Macaulay fails to tell, and I have looked in the 'Encyclopedia Americana' in vain for a satisfactory answer." Bunyan was prosecuted under the act against conventicles—that is, religious meetings of dissenters—which was passed after the accession of Charles II. to the throne of England, convicted, and sentenced to perpetual banishment. While awaiting the execution of his sentence, he was confined temporarily in Bedford jail, and as the execution of the sentence was delayed, he remained in jail twelve years, and was then set at liberty.

William K. (Secretary Lecture Committee Y. M. C. A.) says: "Our Lecture Committee have noticed that James Anthony Froude the English historian and Edmund Yates the novelist are coming to this country to lecture. Can you tell us who is their agent in this country? Or, if they have none, can you give us their address in England? 2. What is the correct pronunciation of Froude?" 1. A Lecture Bureau in Boston claims to be agents for these gentlemen. 2. Many Americans pronounce the historian's name so as to rhyme with "food." In England it is generally pronounced so as to rhyme with "loud."

M. N. says: "Will you please inform me through your Notices to Correspondents where Land's End is, what kind of a place it is, and who gave it such a name? I have consulted several maps of the Eastern Continent and British Isles in vain for this information, and now turn to you as a last resort." Land's End is a cape projecting from the south-western corner of England, and can be seen on almost any map. Who originally gave it this name does not appear. By looking carefully along the south-western coast of that portion of England known as Cornwall, on the map, you will be able to find Land's End.

⁂ *Several letters stand over to be answered in our next.*